Enclosed

THE QUAKERESS

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BY

MAX ADELER

AUTHOR OF "OUT OF THE HURLY BURLY," "ELBOW ROOM," "CAPTAIN BLUITT," "IN HAPPY HOLLOW," ETC., ETC.

Illustrated

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CHAPTER I

IN A GARDEN

THE main street of Connock dips sharply from the crest of the hill towards the river, and when it has run downward between the high levels on which a few dwelling-houses stand and passed further on the hundred or more shops that border it, the road sweeps across the canal and the river, and then out, a ribbon of white dust, among the Merion hills.

On a First-day morning in June of the year 1861, George Fotherly drove in his square carriage with his stout bay horse along the road from his farm amid the hills and up the steep incline of the street.

It was near to the hour of service in the Episcopal Church, and the pavements were thronged with well-dressed people walking leisurely to the sanctuary, when George stopped his horse at the grey double house just at the top of the first level of the hill to the right, the house separated from the church by the space of its own garden and that of the parsonage.

From the window of the living room of the house a young girl saw him, and when he had tied his horse to the iron post by the curb, she opened the front door and came upon the porch to greet him with a smile and an extended hand.

She was dressed in a frock of grey India silk with a white linen collar turned over it, and with no

jewel at her throat. Unadorned with lace or other finery, the dress shaped itself to her slender form, and fell in ample folds from her waist. Her soft brown hair was drawn smoothly from her forehead without a fluff or a curl that had not resisted her effort to restrain its wilfulness, and beneath the rich simplicity of her hair was a face of delicate beauty.

Out of her blue-grey eyes looked gentleness and goodness, and the flush of health was upon her cheeks. The fine, straight little nose, the slightly rounded, firm chin, the low, wide forehead and the mouth just large enough for beauty, with lips that escaped both fulness and thinness, helped to give to her conspicuous loveliness. She was a girl whom to see for the first time was to have a strong impression of celestial purity.

The man who hastened up the steps, through the iron gate, and along the brief paved way to the porch where the girl stood awaiting him, was a burly fellow. Tall, broad-shouldered, masterful in form and bearing, with a strong, rough face close shaven and browned by the sun, with a firm, resolute chin, and with eyes that seemed to have depth in them, he contrasted strongly with the slight figure and the delicate features of the girl who clasped his hand.

They stood for a moment, he upon the step just lower than the level of the porch floor that might speak to her face to face.

"Is thee not ready, Abby?" he asked, with a note of surprise in his voice when he saw that she did not wear her bonnet.

It was his practice to stop for her each First-day morning and to drive her over to the Plymouth Meeting, two miles away, while her father and mother went together in another vehicle.

"I am not going to meeting to-day, George," she said.

"Not going! What is the matter?"

"Father is away from home," she answered, "and mother is not so well that I can be absent all the morning."

George, looking disappointed and serious, came upon the porch and sat upon a chair, while Abby seated herself near to him.

"But thee can go alone," she said.

"Not without thee, Abby," he answered, and she seemed to have expected him to say so. Plainly she was not displeased.

When they had talked for awhile about her mother and about other subjects, Abby said to him:

"We may have a meeting of our own, George."

"Yes," he answered, "it will be better."

George parted from her to take his horse around to the stable, while she re-entered the house. They met again upon the porch.

"Shall we have the meeting with mother?" asked Abby.

George was silent for a moment, and then, yielding to an impulse not altogether free from selfishness, he said:

"The garden will be very pleasant, Abby."

"Let us go into the garden, then," said the girl with a smile.

Together they descended the porch steps and strolled along the gravelled path, around the north corner of the house, and over the lawn to where the mighty apple tree, wide-spreading its branches, drooped them downward like a canopy. Beneath, by the trunk of the tree, was a slatted bench whereon the young man sat, wearing his broad hat and holding out his hand for his companion.

Around them the flowers bloomed, the grass

was soft to the tread and pleasant to the eye, the cherry trees bore ripening fruit among the green leaves, the grape vines near by them on the left hand, thrust out their tendrils to the trellis that upbore them, and the soft wind blew in from the south-west across the lawn, fluttering the leaves and warm with the promise of the summer time. Beyond the screen of rose bushes which partly shut away the street, the last stragglers hurried to the church, and when Abby sat upon the bench the two Friends were alone. Before them was the stretch of grass dotted by shrubs and ending at the southern fence of the garden; beyond, far away across the roofs of the town, uplifting from the deep valley of the intervening river, was the dark verdure of the great hills, covered by forest trees.

As they composed themselves for worship, Mrs. Ponder, the minister's wife, whose rule was to be late for church and late for everything, came hastily out upon the porch of the parsonage. Looking over the hedge and around the lilac bush, she saw them sitting there, and as she forced her fingers into her glove she said:

"Deliberately shutting themselves out from the means of grace!"

Then, as she went down the steps and along the path to the side door of the church, she added:

"It is a shame for that rough, big man to have that darling girl!"

But those who knew them well would not have thought ill of such a union. The strong, true man and the tender, pure woman are Nature's perfect material for the fusion of soul and body in the wedlock which moves through eternity to closer and closer union.

This man and this woman were well born in the high sense of that phrase. Behind them were two

centuries of clean physical living and spiritual victory. Both had a precious heritage of impulse to lofty things, given by a long line of ancestors who were steadfast to righteousness. The true Quaker prepares the ruddy cheek and the pure soul for his children's great-grandchildren, and the forefathers of these two had been faithful.

Thus in the glory of the summer morning these heirs of the conquerors together sought the illumination of that Presence which had brought light and blessing to the spirits of their fathers.

A spiritual nature strengthened by spiritual exercise had given to the man the power of almost complete abstraction. When he closed his eyes as he sat with Abby beneath the tree the natural world was gone. There was in his soul, it is true, a subtle sense of the woman's presence, but he was not conscious of it; and if he had perceived it he would have felt that it was a part of that exalted spirituality into which he had entered. He worshipped, but the object of his worship was Divine Love; and what was the sentiment with which he regarded Abby but an emanation of that Love? This he had said to himself more than once. He did not say it now or think it. Simply he flung open the door of his soul and sought to have the Divine Inflowing; to meet God there in that hidden chamber and to have the secret place made holy by communion with the Most High.

And so Nature vanished from his sight and all its sounds were hushed, all its loveliness was hidden, while he was lifted up to fellowship with Him whose love has made all things beautiful.

But for Abby there was a less exclusive sense of the Spiritual Presence. Through her shut eyelids she could not help seeing the glow of the sunshine. She heard the note of the robins that

ran upon the grass, the soft quaver of the cuckoo in the neighbouring tree, the twitter of the sparrows that rustled about in the leafy plant that climbed upon and covered the wall of the house. She was enveloped by the perfume of the clustered roses and the lilacs, and she felt the gentle air that breathed upon her cheek.

These were influences that affected her soul; and besides, she heard faintly from the window of the distant church the deep droning of the diapason and the strain of the higher music that seemed like the humming of melodious bees; and all these things combined to help her to spiritual exaltation.

It was in the very fibre of her nature to find in the visible things that tell of a Divine Maker the evidence of His presence with her; and perhaps the spirit does speak to some souls more distinctly through these things, even while He has His own secret contact with the inner nature. To Abby the faint, sweet strain of distant music was like an audible fragrance of flowers.

But, alas for George! his presence gave no fervour to the flame of her devotion.

For many minutes the two sat there and worshipped while the Lord was in His holy temple, which is the soul that waits for Him; and so they both had peace.

Now and then from the railway, deep down in the valley upon the margin of the river, there came the harsh sound of the steam whistle and of the rush and roar of the train; but, save for this and the panting of a distant iron furnace, silence was upon them, until at last the man opened his eyes, and, looking as if he had had refreshing, turned to Abby and clasped her hand to end the period of worship.

They did not rise for a time, so fair was the scene

when they looked through the rifts in the foliage out upon the hills, and so beautiful the lawn before them, dappled by the glints of sunlight that filtered through the leaves. When they had sat silent for a few moments, George, waving his hand outward toward the hills, said :

"'I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help.' I think of that often, Abby, when I drive among the shadows in the clefts of them. It is a lesson not to look for strength to the mean things."

"Yes," said Abby, who perhaps did not at once sound the full depth of that allegory; and as she spoke, the sound of singing came to them half muffled from the church, and Abby, as she heard it, said again :

"And that, too, is beautiful, George, isn't it?"

"We have a better way, I think; the way of quietness."

"Yes, George," said Abby softly; "but their way may also be acceptable to Him. If the singing is from the heart, surely it is so. 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' Thee must not judge thy brethren harshly, George."

"No," he answered, "I would not do that, but I cannot understand. The way of the Spirit is not noisy. We reach him in the secret chamber, without utterance."

"I know it," replied the girl; and indeed she did know it. "But, George, while there is beauty of holiness there is also a real divine beauty of the blue sky, the green hills, the sweet grass and the music of birds and men."

George smiled at her as he saw her face become eager with the force of her feeling, and as they rose to go to the house, he said :

"There is much to be said upon thy side of the

matter, no doubt, but if thee is to become fond of church music, Abby, thee must take care, or thee will drift away from Friends."

When they had lingered among the roses, and George had plucked a posy which Abby should give to her mother, the two went into the house, where George greeted Rachel Woolford. Then, coming out, he brought his horse to the front of the house, and bidding farewell to Abby he drove away.

She went to the corner of the porch behind the clematis that climbed high upon the lattice, and as she followed him with her eyes while he passed quickly down the street homeward, she thought of him.

In the seclusion of her village home, in her village life, mingling chiefly with Friends, this man had been much in her mind and in her company. She had known him always, it seemed to her. Together they had learned lessons in the Friends' school at Plymouth, and she had seen him at the meetings on First-day, across the bare benches, ever since she could remember. Even when a boy he had never failed to come and speak to her under the sycamore trees after meeting; and when he had grown to manhood and had a horse of his own, he began the practice of driving her to meeting on the day of worship.

Her father and mother sanctioned this companionship. Plainly, also, it had the approval of the watchful members of the meeting, for no word of discouragement was heard. George was a favourite with them. He wore the plain garments in simplicity; his speech and his conduct were those of a consistent Friend; and sometimes, when he was moved to exhortation in the meeting on First-day, he had power that gave to Friends fresh assurance

of the purpose of the Spirit to choose fitting instruments through which to speak to God's people.

What could be better than that this strong man among the children of the Spirit should cherish and espouse this lovely girl, a very Friend of Friends, whose gentleness and reverence and sweet, modest behaviour gave proof, as George's preaching did, of the complete excellence of the theories and the methods of the Society?

Abby herself could not have told just when the first thought came to her of George as her lover. She had always liked him, and if she had come to love him enough to be his wife, the change had been made insensibly. He had said no word of love to her, but he acted as if he felt sure of her affection; and she knew that he felt sure of it, and she did not venture really to question if she herself felt sure of it.

Love for one whom one should marry seemed to her as if it might be just a strong liking such as she had felt for George from childhood. She was fond of being with him; she liked his talk; in her gentle, quiet, timid life the forcefulness of his character seemed to her wonderful and admirable; and when George had been called upon to bear testimony in the meetings, she marvelled at his words, while she felt deep reverence for the man through whom the Divine power condescended to speak with so much eloquence. If this feeling of hers was not love, what is love?

Sometimes as she peeped out into the great world lying beyond the range of her experience she caught glimpses of something different, and now and then she wondered if there were not indeed for people who are to marry, a love more uplifting and glorious. In books that she had read and in the public journals there had been intimations of a glowing, fiery passion which sometimes transformed its possessors and bore

them upwards to miraculous heights of bliss, and sometimes impelled to awful catastrophe. But this kind of emotion she thought could not be for her, a quiet little girl up in the hills, far away from the world's people and their vanities; nor could she wish it to be hers.

If at times she felt in her woman natur a craving for affection so strong that it might bec me almost like a consuming fire, she closed her eyes and her heart to it all, and turned away with a prayer that the tranquil life should always remain with her. She was sure that is best—the life of quietness, of peace, of holiness and of the indwelling Spirit. She knew what that meant, and George knew it too. Could she not still find peace, perhaps even a higher peace, in wedlock with one whose spirit was perfectly harmonious with hers?

She knew that when George should ask her to be his wife she would say yes, and say it with some gladness; but her heart did sink a little bit, perhaps, when she contemplated that possible crisis of her life. What if, in that solemn union, it were indeed required that there should be a fervour of spirit far more intense than she could ever have for George? And what if, when the bond was made, she should discover that she had never really known what true love is?

She thought deeply of this while George was speeding homeward, with no doubts in his heart of the fervour of his affection; and while she meditated, Mrs. Ponder, freed from church, came through the gate and then upon the porch.

Mrs. Ponder had heard that Abby's mother was not well, and with neighbourly kindliness had called to ask about her. Abby led the minister's wife into the room where Rachel Woolford lay upon the sofa, and when Mrs. Ponder had exchanged

greetings with Rachel and had expressed sympathy for her in her illness, Mrs. Ponder lay back in the rocking chair, and taking a palm-leaf fan from the table with which to toy while she talked, she said to Abby:

"I saw you, Abby dear, in the garden with Mr. Fotherly as I went into church this morning."

"Yes," answered Abby, "the day was so lovely that we found the open air pleasant."

"Persons feel differently about such things," said Mrs. Ponder, "and I am far from wishing to criticize any one, but, my dear, much as I love Nature, I could not bear to neglect worship."

"We were worshipping," said Abby shyly, with her eyes downcast. "We had meeting."

Mrs. Ponder looked at Abby for a moment with surprise upon her face, and then she said:

"Why, my dear child, how perfectly, perfectly sweet! Just you two! It is charming; and so original, too! Dr. Ponder will be interested and amused. In his sacerdotal character, of course, he would be compelled to regard the proceeding as irregular, but looked at from any other standpoint it is really lovely. Perhaps, though, I should not speak of it as original. No doubt our first parents worshipped in their garden in some such fashion on the day of rest; but of course we must remember, on their behalf, that they had no consecrated structure to go to."

Neither Abby nor her mother inclined to interrupt the flow of Mrs. Ponder's talk.

"The truth is," she continued, "there must have been the want of a great many things in the Garden of Eden. How dreadfully uncomfortable! Nothing could induce me to live in such a place. But I could never have done it, at any rate. Even in this delightful June weather I do not dare to go

out of doors without overshoes. The ground never gets entirely dry.

"But I do believe, dear Abby and Mrs. Woolford, that if I had been there I should have done much better than Adam did. One does not like to speak ill of one's fellow men, but do you know really I think he was but a poor creature at the best! No wonder the race made a bad start, with him at the head of it! The only thing in the nature of an extenuating circumstance that you can urge in his behalf is that he had no church training and no good examples about him, unless his wife was a good example, and I am far from clear that she was when we consider everything. I often think that if Dr. Ponder could have had an hour alone with Adam the results to our poor human race might have been so different! The doctor has a sermon on Sublapsarianism that I am perfectly certain would have straightened matters out if the man had been amenable to reason. Are you a Sublapsarian or a Supralapsarian, Abby dear?"

Abby smiled and answered:

"Indeed I hardly know. Thee is so much more learned than I am about such matters."

Mrs. Ponder looked at her half in compassion, half in reproach, and said:

"Not exactly learning, my dear. Call it training, or, if you please, learning that comes from training applied from earliest infancy. Within the fold of the Church even the infant mind learns to grasp the truth about Sublapsarianism—not under that name, but the name is of small importance if the mind is saturated with the facts. Oh, that those dear people who belong to the Friends' Society would consent to make these great truths their own, even in their adult years!

"I know Dr. Ponder would be only too glad to

have permission to open out this particular subject to you—to open it out fully. He is so happy in dealing with these questions and making them plain. May I say so to you? I know you will pardon me, but the truth is the doctor's success in converting Friends has been really extraordinary. He brought in seven in his first parish!"

Mrs. Ponder's manner in telling of this triumph was that of one who should relate how a successful sportsman came home with wild game.

"I know I ought not even to appear to cast any reproach upon people who are so lovely as the Friends, but, oh, my dear Mrs. Woolford! their very loveliness impels me to yearn for them! I am a very poor missionary, though, and I fear I give offence oftener than I produce conviction. You will forgive me, won't you? Mrs. Paxton was furious the other day when I told her, in the kindest manner, that I feared her views were tainted with Erastianism. I am sure she does not know what Erastianism is, but she declared she would never set her foot in our church again, and the doctor had the greatest difficulty in soothing her. You are not Erastian, are you?"

"I hardly know," responded Abby.

"I am sure you are not, for Friends are the greatest kind of people for discipline—at least, I have always understood so; and that is exactly as it ought to be. The longer I live, though, the more I am convinced there is really but one safe way: put your feet firmly upon the Thirty-nine Articles and stand there.

"And now, dear Mrs. Woolford and Abby, I must not keep the doctor's dinner waiting. I must go. I am so glad to find you but slightly ill. Send for me at once if I can help you in any way."

Mrs. Ponder rose from the rocking chair and was

about to put her fan upon the table, when a thought occurred to her, and she hastily sat down again.

"I almost forgot to tell you that my niece and nephew, children of my sister, Mrs. Harley, are coming to the rectory this week to stay for a little while. They live in Maryland. Dolly is a dear girl, and I know both of you will love her; and as for Clayton! I do really think he is the handsomest, finest, brightest fellow in the world. You will come to see Dolly, won't you, Abby?"

Then Mrs. Ponder said farewell and went away; but Abby, who had walked with her to the porch, hid herself again by the clematis vine before she should wait upon her mother.

For those last words of Mrs. Ponder's, lightly said, foolishly said, for aught Abby knew, had made a strange impression upon the girl. It was as if a door had been suddenly opened through which she had a vista of another and more wondrous world. She could not understand. It would have been foolish and futile even to try to understand a feeling which had no impulse from reason and no basis in probability. But she was sure she had a thrill of pleasure mingled with foreboding. She knew dimly that the time was coming swiftly to her when the foundations of her peace would be shaken.

If there be no Power that knows the future, and man unaided cannot read its mystery, whence does the soul, as its great hour draws near, get presage of its destiny?

CHAPTER II

THE SOUTHERNERS

MISS HARLEY came to the parsonage late on Thursday morning with her negro maid and her trunks, and early in the afternoon Mrs. Ponder called at the grey house to entreat Abby to return with her that she might know Dolly at once. "Clayton could not come to-day, my dear," said Mrs. Ponder. "He will be with us on Friday, I think, and meantime you will have a good chance to be well acquainted with Dolly."

So Abby, without bonnet or wrap, went over to the parsonage with the minister's wife, and Dolly came running downstairs at her aunt's summons. Abby extended her hand to the girl, but Dolly in a moment flung her arms about Abby's neck and kissed her.

"You must come right up to my room with me, Miss—Miss—what must I call you?" demanded Dolly.

"Just Abby, if thee pleases," was the reply, given with a smile, for Abby felt that she should like this stranger.

"Well, then, Abby, do you think you could bear to sit down in the litter of a disordered room while I try to put my things away? If you can, we will go up and leave Aunty to her nap or her household cares."

The room was indeed in disorder. Both trunks gaped open in the middle of the floor, and a young negress, neatly dressed and with a cap upon her head, busied herself removing the articles from the

trunk and placing them in the bureau and the closets at the bidding of her mistress. Dolly touched nothing with her own hands. Flinging herself, half-sitting, half-lying, upon the bed, with a huge show-pillow at her elbow while Abby sought a chair, Dolly seemed to care more to enjoy the presence of her visitor than to superintend the distribution of her articles of apparel.

"Aunty has often spoken to me of you and written to me of you," she said, "and I am so glad to know you. You must be very good indeed to please her so much when you do not belong to her church."

Abby laughed and said, "I like Mrs. Ponder very much, and we are glad to have her for so near a neighbour."

"I never met a Friend before," said Dolly, "and you almost make me feel that I should like to be one. But I should have to give up so much, shouldn't I, if I should join them?"

"There are some things that Friends do not approve," said Abby pleasantly; "but I do not know whether thee has many of them, or would find it hard to give them up."

"I couldn't wear a frock like this, could I?" said Dolly, jumping up and snatching from the servant's hand a bright silk dress covered with lace and other finery.

"I never saw a dress of that kind upon a Friend. It would startle our meeting, I fear."

"But I could renounce it without a pang if the Friends' dress became me as it does you. Your frock makes mine look tawdry. And that bonnet! Penny, hand it to me! Abby, what *would* you look like in such a bonnet? It would really spoil your looks, I do believe. There, will you let me try it on you?"

Without waiting for permission Dolly put the bonnet upon her companion's head, tied the strings beneath her chin, and then led her to the glass that she might look at herself.

Abby, with her cheeks rosy, felt half ashamed to look, but when she did look she thought the vision not repulsive, and Dolly said: "Why, my dear, you look perfectly lovely in it! I had no idea it was so pretty."

Abby took it off in some haste, but with a smiling face. She was not displeased with the figure in the glass or with Dolly's freedom, but she had a feeling that it was not quite right for her even to play with such things.

But Dolly would have her try on other and even gayer garments, always expressing admiration after each experiment; and at last, throwing herself upon the bed again, she said:

"No! I think I could not give up fine clothes. I love them too much. But do all Friends dislike them?"

"It is not dislike, exactly," said Abby. "The theory of Friends is that they should not love fine clothes; that fine clothing is vanity. They think that the mind is diverted by them from more important things."

"But fine clothes are so very important and so delightful."

"And Friends believe that they should find delight in something better. In old times they had a rhyme about it which I knew when a child, but it will be unpleasant for thee to hear."

"No, no, no! not a bit unpleasant! Do give it to me."

"Thee will think me unkind. The rhyme is not heard now, I think. It was written for children in the old, old time."

"I know you will say it for me."

Abby hesitated for a moment, and coloured, and then she said, "It is this:

'Dress not to please, nor imitate the nice.
Be like good Friends and follow their advice.
The rich man, gailey clothed, is now in hell,
And Dogges did eat attirèd Jezebel.'

It is horrid, isn't it?" asked Abby when she had done.

"It is very funny," said Dolly, "and I am so much obliged to you. But, Abby?"

"Well?"

"Don't repeat it to aunty, will you?"

"Oh no!"

"Because, you know, Clayton and I call her Aunt Jezebel. Her name is Isabel, but they are just the same names really—did you know?—and we do it to tease her. By the way, I forgot about Clayton. I am so eager to have you meet him. He will be here on Friday, and we shall have great times. Did aunty tell you about him?"

"Just a little."

"But a little can't do him justice. He is a cavalier; a perfect Southern gentleman. I know you will like him. He is a dear. Women always fall in love with him. Are there any nice men about here?"

Abby hardly knew what answer to make to the question. She could think of no very nice young man but George, and she felt that she could not speak of him to this girl who was so eager an inquirer after men.

"Not many," she said.

"It must be so dull for you!" responded Dolly. "That is another reason why you will like Clayt. When you come to see me upon our plantation—

and you will come some day, won't you?—I will introduce you to a dozen or more nice fellows."

Abby felt that she did not care to continue the talk along that line, so she said:

"Thee lives upon a plantation, does thee?"

"Yes, right on the bank of the Sanaquan River."

"And thee has slaves?"

"More than a hundred. Penny, my own maid here, is a slave."

Penny had gone downstairs for a moment.

"Really belongs to thee? Thy property?"

"Of course."

"And thee can sell her if thee wishes and spend the money thee gets for her?"

"Yes indeed! And I will sell her if she doesn't behave herself. We have her whipped sometimes."

Abby did not reply. She turned and looked out of the window. Dolly, for a moment, seemed not so charming a companion. And Abby felt that she should like to look at Penny again.

She had never seen a slave, and to be in the house with one gave a little shock to her. When Penny entered the room, Abby looked at her with curious interest which, for a moment, made her deaf to Dolly's talk. Then the negress, in handling some article taken from the trunk, aroused Dolly's displeasure, and that young woman, springing up and stamping her foot upon the floor, exclaimed:

"Penelope! how dare you muss that scarf in that manner! You bad girl! Here, give it this instant to me!" and Dolly, snatching the scarf with her left hand, gave an angry blow upon her servant's cheek with the other.

"Worthless niggers!" she said, only half aloud, as she turned toward Abby while she smoothed and refolded the scarf.

A thrill ran along the Quaker girl's nerves; a

thrill of pity for the servant, and of dismay at the act and the words of Miss Harley. She had never heard any woman speak so harshly to a dependant. She had never seen such a manifestation of unreasonable anger. She was surprised that Penny showed no surprise. She had a sense of shame that Dolly was not ashamed. But that person, flinging herself upon the bed again, went on with her talk as if this little outburst of anger were a not unusual thing.

"Clayt sings divinely," she said. "But perhaps you do not care for music?"

"Oh, yes," said Abby, "I love it."

"You are not a musician?"

"No."

"Aunty told me that the Friends do not approve of music. And you have no piano in your house?"

"No."

"And never dance?"

"No."

"No music, no balls, no low dresses! But, my dear, how do you pass your existence? It must be dreadful."

"But thee does not think such things the whole of life, does thee?" asked Abby with a smile.

"Not absolutely the whole; but things of that kind, things that give pleasure, help to make life tolerable—at any rate, pleasant; and you, poor Abby, can have none of them!"

"My life is very, very pleasant," said Abby. "Friends are taught to find pleasure in inward things; and if one has that kind of pleasure, one learns to care less for things that are outward."

Dolly looked at her, and flung her head backward with a gesture of impatience:

"I need something more substantial, my dear. The things you speak of are too shadowy; and

dreadfully tiresome, too. I suppose we shall have to go to church here and listen to Uncle Ponder's prosing. Did you ever hear him preach? He is particularly dull, poor old man! I always go to sleep in church. I care only for the music; and that too is often stupid. Clayt won't go. He never does. Men have so many privileges! I wish I were a man."

Abby went home with a feeling in her mind of perplexity about her new acquaintance. She had hoped to like Dolly; she wished to like her, but she doubted if she should ever have a near friendship for such a girl. She was hardly conscious that behind her wish to like Dolly was that strange feeling of curiosity and of premonition with which she had heard of Dolly's brother. Nobody could account for or interpret the vague, shadowy impression that this man would come to mean much to her. The first impulse of any one would be to put it aside as foolish, but to Abby it was a wonderful fact, and her experience has been that of myriads of others into whose nature the spark of true love has been mysteriously blown.

She did not see Dolly on Friday morning, and Clayton did not come. Late on Friday afternoon Abby and her mother sat upon their porch while Abby told her mother much of the meeting with the Maryland girl. She said nothing of the angry treatment of Penny or of Dolly's inquiry about men; but Rachel Woolford had clear vision, and she said:

"Thee did not look with favour on her, did thee, dear?"

"She is not just like our people," answered Abby; and then, thinking that if Clayton came she must not seem indifferent to the sister, she added: "But she has much that is charming. Thee

knows, mother, she has been brought up so differently from our ways."

"I know," said Rachel, "and we must be careful of harsh judgment and self-righteousness. Is it a slave-girl that is with her?"

"Yes, mother."

"She is free, if she chooses, when she comes here, if she knew it. But we may find it wiser not to meddle with the matter. Thy father, though, may not be of that opinion. The brother has not yet come, has he?"

"No, mother."

Rachel was silent for a moment. Then she put her hand tenderly upon her daughter's arm and said:

"If thee is civil to him it will be enough."

Abby felt almost as if her mother had read her soul. She coloured slightly and answered:

"It will be perhaps enough."

"For I think we may well desire not to enlarge very much our acquaintance among the world's people. They do not understand us, and they have many dangerous allurements—for young people particularly. We must always walk circumspectly, dear. Thy love for music, which is very innocent, even that may be a snare for thee."

"I cannot think sweet music harmful, mother."

"No, quite likely it is not. God made the sounds possible and gave thee an affection for them. It is pleasing to me too, sometimes, but Friends see peril in it, and for thee, if thee prefers it to spiritual things."

A young man came slowly up the street, looking about him from house to house. The women upon the porch saw him, and he, coming by the gate of the garden and perceiving them, walked up the stone steps, bowed graciously, and said:

"Will you pardon me for asking where Dr. Ponder lives?"

He looked at Abby, but her mother answered the question; and then, when the question was answered, he still looked at Abby while he bowed again and returned to the pavement.

"It is the brother, I think," said Rachel tranquilly.

"I think so," said Abby; but indeed she knew it, and her heart beat strongly as she watched him go upon the parsonage porch and summon the servant to the door. She would not forget that slight graceful figure, the black eyes and hair and the handsome face. The memory of them was to be with her henceforth until her dying day.

Rachel also had seen that he was good-looking, but she said:

"His Aunt Ponder will wish to introduce him to her church people, where he can have gaiety. We shall avoid seeing much of him, Abby."

But this was not Abby's idea, nor Dolly's nor Mrs. Ponder's. That very night after supper Dolly came over to introduce Clayton and to bring from her aunt an insistent invitation that Abby should take tea with them on Saturday evening; and Abby consented to go.

Dr. Ponder appeared at the tea table and greeted Abby with tenderness, putting his hand upon her shoulder and smiling graciously upon her. Long ago he had marked her as another trophy of his skill as a bringer-in of Quakers. "One of my lambs," he said to himself as he placed her by his side at the table.

The doctor's grace was said standing. It was long, and it included a petition for the Jews. The Quakers he reserved for the silent entreaties of the closet, instead of associating them with removal of the pangs of hunger.

Dr. Ponder's thought was upon the subject of the Jews as the meal began.

"I have no doubt whatever," he said, "that we are the lost tribes. The evidence——"

"By 'we' you mean ——?" asked Clayton.

"I mean the Anglo-Saxon race, to which you and I belong," answered the doctor. "Most of the prophecies have been fulfilled in us. The riches, the power, the splendid intellectual development, the purity of our religion, all these things go to prove that we are indeed a part of the Chosen People. We are in the broadest sense the heirs of the promises."

"But we were lost," said Clayton.

"Yes," answered the doctor, "our ten tribes were."

"I am so glad we were lost," said Mrs. Ponder, positively.

"Glad, wife! How can you speak in that way?"

"I mean, birdie," responded Mrs. Ponder, "glad we were lost in the sense that we wandered off somewhere and finally came over here. It seems to me that the tribes that were not lost got the worst of it."

"I'm a little glad myself," said Clayton. "Maryland's ever so much more delightful than Palestine, I should think—just now, at any rate."

"You can find traces of the truth," said the doctor, taking up the general matter again, "even in names. Why should the lost tribes be Saxons? The subject is obscure until you reflect that that very name is indicated in the phrase 'Isaac's son,' and we are all Isaac's sons if we are the lost tribes."

"And we're not so very proud of our ancestor, either," whispered Dolly to Abby.

"The cradle of the race, you remember," said the doctor, "was between the Black Sea and the

Sea of Azov, in Scythia, which is really *Sacae*, that is, the last syllable of the name Isaac, from which Saxon has been derived. There is little doubt that Sargon transported the ten tribes of Israel from Media in Assyria, whither they had been taken by Shalmanezer 721 B.C. to Scythia, and that is why there are so many Jews in Russia now. High authorities trace the royal family of Great Britian back to David, and it is really a remarkable example of the persistent influence of heredity that its members have the blonde hair and complexion of David. London is named after Dan: Lon-Dan; and then, when you think of the lion of Judah and the British lion——"

"I think," interposed Mrs. Ponder, "that we ought to be very careful not to exaggerate or to guess wildly in these matters. Uncle only conjectures we are the lost tribes."

"Partly conjecture, wife, and partly demonstrated fact."

"In my childhood," persisted Mrs. Ponder, "I was misled frequently by the ignorance or the depravity of the publishers of Sunday School books. The pictures showed the spies returning with the grapes of Eschol, and each grape was as large as a watermelon, and Absalom was always represented as swinging from a tree by hair much longer than he was."

"The Bible does not say he was caught by his hair," said the doctor.

"I know it, birdie, and I'm sure the good Samaritan did not pour oil and wine from a bottle into an orifice in the poor man's chest as the Sunday School books represented."

"Riper knowledge and better taste have resulted in the retirement of those foolish books," said the doctor. "No grape, even in that favoured land,

was ever so large as a melon, and the Samaritan in that lovely story simply cleansed and soothed the sufferer's wounds."

"A lesson for all of us, too!" reflected Mrs. Ponder, while renewing the tea in Abby's cup. "Kindness for each other, well directed and judicious kindness, which I am afraid we do not always exhibit. I have never been satisfied, for example, with the missionary box that we made up last Christmas for the clergyman in Colorado."

"Why not, auntie?" asked Dolly.

"Somebody in the Ladies' Aid Society suggested that as Christmas was near we should send a plum pudding. So when the box was to be made ready four ladies brought plum puddings, and there was almost nothing else in the box but some underclothing and two pairs of dumb-bells, and I said plainly to the meeting that it was a queer outfit for a missionary in a cold climate. The mercury out there goes to thirty-two below, and there is a blizzard every other week."

"Not quite so often as that, wife!" said Dr. Ponder, smiling.

"Nearly that often, at any rate. I would have filled the box properly without the Ladies' Aid, but——Well—well, I will say it in the privacy of my own family; the fact is, that Dr. Ponder will never in the other world have it laid to his charge that 'he heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them."

"I wouldn't say that, wife," remarked the doctor, colouring.

"Very well, perhaps it were better unsaid; but how people with souls can be so inconsiderate of a poor minister who is working in the cold part of the vineyard, is inconceivable to me."

"Are you sure they have souls?" asked Clayton.

"Not so very sure," answered Mrs. Ponder smiling, "and sometimes I think it might perhaps be better if none of us had, like that fabled girl—What's her name? Dudheen, or——?"

"Undine," said Abby modestly.

"Yes, Undine. I knew it was something like that; because then we should have so much less trouble. Think what a relief it would be to Uncle there not to have to care for them!"

"But, wife," said Dr. Ponder in protest, "I do not at all count it trouble. It is joy. Most assuredly it could give me no kind of satisfaction to know that my fellow-beings are like the beasts that perish."

"Maybe the beasts have souls, too," ventured Dolly.

"My dear," said the doctor, to Mrs. Ponder, "you recall Senator Wigger, who was a vestryman in my first parish? He inclined, I am sorry to say, to hold the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls. He thought that men's souls after death took up a new life in the bodies of animals."

"Senator Wigger reversed the process," said Mrs. Ponder. "If I believed at all in transmigration, which I do not, I should be compelled to believe that brute animal souls come into human bodies. I know plenty of cat women and parrot women, and pig men are common. You always find them in church vestries—generally they are accounting wardens. In Uncle's first parish——"

"I would defer allusion to that, wife," said the doctor, lifting his hand.

"Perhaps you are right, birdie, but when a vestryman in a Christian church tries to pay his pew-rent by sending the minister sprouted potatoes and mouldy flour, it is useless for any one to pretend that in his inner nature he belongs to the human family."

"I fear, wife," said the doctor, sadly, "you will give to our dear young Friend here wrong notions of the Church. These things, my dear Abby, of which Mrs. Ponder speaks, are but trifles—matters incident to the weakness of poor human nature. A church may be thoroughly Apostolic in all its departments and yet have folly and sinfulness and selfishness among its members."

"Friends have faults, too," said Abby courteously.

"Many, many faults!" said Dr. Ponder, with emphasis and some eagerness. "It is appalling to think of them. Take, for example, their complete neglect of the——"

"Not now, birdie; not here!" said Mrs. Ponder. "The poor child will not care for a full discussion of the matter while she is with us to meet Mary's children."

"No doubt you are right. But Abby, my dear, I must, upon a favourable opportunity, open out the whole subject to you, so that you may see precisely how far and in what particulars the Friends, worthy as they are, have surrendered the very vital and——"

"Birdie!" exclaimed Mrs. Ponder, with a touch of severity in her tone. The doctor said no more, but took a fresh muffin.

"I think myself," said Clayton, "that uncle would have more time for an exhaustive treatment of the subject upon some other occasion. You don't care to go into it now, do you, Miss Woolford?"

Abby laughed lightly, and made no reply; but Dolly leaned over to her and said:

"Uncle is just absurd! Let us go out to the porch and be reasonable."

After supper the three young people went out to the darkness of the porch, and presently Mrs.

Ponder joined them, while Uncle Ponder withdrew to his study to write the last words of his evening sermon for the next day. All were in high spirits, and Mrs. Ponder, who never failed of vivacity, was in sympathy with them. Her mind not unnaturally was much occupied with church matters, and these found a place in her conversation frequently.

Clayton told many good stories and related many wonderful adventures in which he had taken part, and animation and fervour were in his talk because for one of the listeners he had conceived great admiration. Dolly was a capital story-teller, and she almost surpassed Clayton in supplying entertainment. And Mrs. Ponder made them all laugh when she said, referring to Bible times:

"Either clothing was amazingly cheap, or the practice of rending garments was an awfully expensive method of expressing grief. As for sackcloth and ashes, I might endure sackcloth if it were properly fitted, but I could never stand ashes in my hair."

Abby told no stories, and she had had no adventures. She listened eagerly to her companions and laughed heartily, and found Clayton a very pleasing person indeed. Toward her he used that manner of extreme deference which women always like.

"You must sing for us, Clayt," said his sister at last; and both Mrs. Ponder and Abby entreated him to do so. He made no pretence of reluctance. Softly, with a clear tenor, he sang one or two songs to Abby's great delight, and then Dolly said:

"And that lost-love song."

"It is too sad," answered Clayton. "We don't want dismal things."

But Dolly urged him, and so, hesitating for a moment, he sang with tenderness and true feeling

the song for which his sister had asked him. Abby felt the deep pathos of it, but the tears trickled upon her cheeks when the singer took up the final verse:

O my lost love, and my own, own love,
And my love that loved me so!
Is there never a chink in the world above
Where they listen for words from below?
Nay, I spoke once, and I grieved thee sore,
I remember all that I said,
And now thou wilt hear me no more—no more,
Till the sea gives up her dead.

There was silence when the song ended. Then Clayton said something of a light nature to Abby, but she could not at once answer him, lest the quaver in her voice should show her feeling.

"I wish we had you in our choir, Clayton," said Aunt Ponder, bringing relief to the tension. "Our tenor does not know how to articulate. Nobody can hear a word of what he is singing; although, for my part," she continued, "there are some words in the hymn book that I would as lief not hear. I never could bear that hymn that begins 'Stand up my soul,' for I think a person ought not to sing to his own soul when he goes to church, and souls can't stand up, anyhow."

"How do you know, aunty?" asked Clayton.

"I don't know; but if they are anything like those pictures of cherubs—the horrid little creatures without legs, I mean—of course they can't."

Although Abby lived but a few steps away, Clayton would go with her to her home when she had said farewell, and he lingered at her door for a minute or two to talk with her before she entered and went upstairs with the music and the words of that song running through her memory—

"My own, own love, and my love that loved me so."

And while the song sang itself to her, her mind was busy contrasting Clayton with George. She saw before her the big, handsome farmer with the broad shoulders, the mighty hand brown with the sun and hard with toil; the serious man, who rarely jested; who talked little and not often lightly; who seemed to live in a spiritual height above her; who in his preaching sometimes showed knowledge of things that were hidden from her; who, despite his tenderness and gentleness and refined feeling, cared not for the music that thrilled her soul, and would have shut his ears to the passion of the song she had just now heard. She honoured him; she revered him; she had a kind of strange awe of him while she liked his companionship. But this other man! Not much taller than she was; with small white hands, small feet, delicate features, a pallid skin made more pallid by the intense blackness of his thick curly hair, and his dark eyes. This man, with the sweet, musical voice and evidently a nature of exquisite sensitiveness to the music and the sentiment of the song he had sung! She felt herself somehow upon a level with him. She felt so, although her fancy inclined to lift him up until he seemed to be too beautiful and too gifted for a plain, ordinary commonplace girl such as she was to have companionship with. She tried to rid her mind of him as she prepared for sleep, but always his image came back to her, and with it that great question, What does he think of me? And while she thought of it and of him, and was half happy in her meditation, all the matter became sweet and strange confusion to her, and she slumbered.

CHAPTER III

FIRST-DAY AT PLYMOUTH MEETING

ON First-day, after breakfast, Clayton went out upon the porch of the parsonage to taste the sweetness of the morning, and Dolly followed him. The air, bearing the odours of the flowers, was filled with the delicious moist coolness of the night and the dew. The hills were violet and misty beyond the valley. The wind moved gently through the trees of the Woolford garden, where the birds were fluttering and twittering and the sun was bringing warmth to the shining wet grasses and the beaded leaves. The Harleys were not used to the hills, which to the dweller in a flat country always have about them something surprising and mysterious. They were now softened and made remote by the light vapour that hung in the atmosphere, the tribute of the river to the cloud.

The brother and the sister stood by the porch-rail looking out upon them, and while they gazed silently Abby came from the rear door of her house, in her First-day garments, but wearing a white apron and a filmy hood upon her head.

She did not see the Harleys, for she went along the gravelled walks among the flower beds, clipping the blooms from the bushes and catching them in her apron. In fact, her thought was much upon the parsonage and its guests; but in that house late-rising was the practice, and she had not expected to find any one upon the porch. So she

did not look up, but went from plant to plant without raising her eyes and without considering if any one were watching her.

But Clayton's eyes were gleaming as he looked at her, and in Dolly's soul, mingled with admiration, was a touch of envy of the girl whose loveliness was far beyond the need of artifice.

Going hither and thither among the beds, Abby came nearer to the border fence, and she had just lifted her hand to pluck a great lilac blossom from the bush when she saw the watchers upon the parsonage porch. She gave a little cry expressive of the shock of the surprise, and then with the flush deepening upon her ruddy cheek and rising to her white forehead, she laughed and said, "Good morning!"

Then Clayton leaped over the porch railing and came to her, and she greeted him with sweet gentleness. Picking some roses from her apron she said to him:

"These are for thy sister."

"And is there none for me?" he asked.

"Yes, one for thee, if thee will have it," and she put into his hand a crimson bud.

Then Clayton asked the favour that he might come over into the garden and help her gather the flowers. But she said:

"No, I thank thee. I have quite enough, and I must go into the house for my duties there." And then she added shyly, "But thee can come some other time and help me and help thyself and thy sister."

"Some other time" seemed to Clayton almost too far distant and too indefinite for his eagerness, and so he said:

"Are Friends very strict about Sunday and Sunday things, like visiting?"

"Not very strict," answered Abby smiling; "but we go to meeting always on First-day morning."

"Meeting? Where?" asked Clayton.

"To our own regular Meeting; Plymouth Meeting."

"How far from here is it?"

"About two miles; right out that way," answered Abby, pointing to the north-east.

"May I go with you, to-day?" he asked anxiously.

Abby hesitated. George would come for her as he always did. He would have a carriage for two persons. If Abby should go off with this stranger, what would George's feelings be? She saw quickly that if Dolly could go with George the difficulty would be removed; but Dolly probably would not care to go to meeting, and George might not wish to ask her to go in his carriage. So after a moment of perplexity, Abby said:

"I have a custom of going in a carriage with a friend of my father's, who comes for me, but——"

"And there is no room for me?" demanded Clayton.

"Usually there is room but for two persons, and——"

"Well, then, you will walk over with me, won't you? It is cool enough and bright and beautiful enough. Let us walk over, and you can show me the scenery and tell me all about Meeting and about Friends. Please take me with you!"

"I should like to go, too," said Dolly. "I wonder if your friend will not let me have your place in the carriage?"

"I will ask him," replied Abby, who for herself had some feeling of pleasure at the promise of this arrangement, but some doubts about George.

A little later than nine o'clock the two girls and Clayton sat upon the Woolford porch when George drove up and hitched his horse in front of the house. He had expected to see no one but Abby, and when he had been introduced to the Harleys, and had sat with them for a few moments, Dolly said to him:

"Mr. Fotherly, I want so much to go to your Meeting. Abby and my brother have agreed to walk there, but I never could take long walks, and so Abby intended to ask you if I might ride with you."

There could be but one response to that suggestion, and George made it with grave courtesy, concealing bravely his disappointment. Then, as Abby and Clayton, bidding the others farewell, went out from the gate and turned up the street to begin their journey, George lingered for a moment to talk with Dolly and to say good-morning to Rachel Woolford within the house.

George was troubled to think of Abby gone away with the young Southerner upon a journey she had been used to make with him and to give happiness to him; but he said to himself, "It is but courtesy to her neighbours' guest, and not to be seriously considered." And then, the natural man in him had not been so thoroughly subdued that he should be indifferent to the charm of this bright young creature with rosy lips and sparkling eyes, who plainly wished to ride with him.

The fanciful clothing, gay with ribbons and colours, might indeed seem odd in the carriage with the grave preacher; but Friends would understand the need of attention to a visitor, and for the reproach of others he cared nothing.

He helped her to mount into the carriage and then he sat beside her, and at once she began to talk to him with animation. She put aside levity.

She was deferential. She looked up to him. Her opinions were presented timidly as suggestions. Without clear purpose, but, as it were, instinctively, she made constant tribute to his superiority. She sat at his feet as a learner. She invited him to talk. She drew him out; she was a mere thirsty attendant at the fountain of wisdom. She was eager to learn about Friends. She was warm in expressing her admiration of much that she saw in them; and she praised Abby with real enthusiasm.

Often, as she spoke, she would turn her face around and upwards, her eyes, when they met his, seeming to appeal to him and to express respect and trust. Her manner was as if she would say: "You are so strong and wise that my weakness and ignorance impel me to you for help. I want you to help me and instruct me, and to let some of your light shine in upon my darkness."

It was plain to George that she liked him, and no man is great enough to be indifferent to the subtle admiration of a young and pretty woman. He seemed to her so big and strong and forceful! She had never cared for small men. Behind his glove, on the broad hand that held the rein, she could see that he had a wrist like Esau's. "Such a splendid manly man!" she said to herself.

Before the carriage reached the very top of the hill, George found himself really in a little glow of friendliness for his companion. Then, in the very midst of one of her sentences, her eye caught the glorious picture that lay below them in the hollow to the left, where for mile after mile the green billowy fields roll away to the far-off Chester Hills. Dolly stopped abruptly, and putting her finger-tips upon George's arm, she uttered an exclamation of astonishment and delight. Pointing to the valley, she said:

"Oh, look there! Isn't that lovely!"

That touch of the hand, light, but for a moment, unconscious, it might be, upon her part, made George irresponsive to her talk about the landscape. The landscape he knew. To him it had ever been glorious, and never so glorious as when, with Abby by his side, he had looked upon it. But now, with the thrill of the finger-tips upon him, he was conscious that whatever might be in the soul of his companion, there was right here for him a summons to gird himself for conflict.

He urged his horse forward, and though Dolly talked on as if she had not observed his neglect to answer, he said little more in response to her but Yes or No, and as if by carelessness he withdrew from contact with her garments. She seemed not to perceive this, but when the jolting of the carriage by a stone thrust her slightly against him, she laughed, asked pardon sweetly, and resumed her talk and her questioning, while a ribbon from her dress fluttered its end against his shoulder.

And while she talked and seemed to him so fascinating that he could hardly restrain himself from speaking to her in such a fashion as to commend himself to her, his memory went back to an old, old battleground on which in fierce anguish, in wrestling prayer, with strong crying and tears, he had at last won a mighty victory. He had conquered, but even while he stood triumphant there had been half regret that the triumph was achieved. Strange soul of man, in which one seems to fight against himself! Where the spiritual nature must conquer or die, but cannot conquer without remembering and still feeling the exquisite sweetness and the strong allurements of the evil thing that was conquered!

George felt his soul shudder as the thought came

to him that there may have been no final victory, but that again he must buckle on his armour and take up the conflict. And yet he knew that that is the appointed lot of man in this earthly life; that there is no end of battle till the carnal man has been left behind by the flight of the spiritual man to the world of spirits. And while the girl beside him prattled on and he was civil to her in monosyllables, his thought went out and over the matter, and once more he saw plainly how vain it is to look to formalism for help in such a battle. "How shall ceremonies avail?" he said to himself. "How shall priest or pomp or flaunting finery of worship give strength to a man in that struggle? It is a death-grapple with hell, and in the combat with spiritual wickedness in high places none can help but the Divine Spirit of Him who, tempted at all points like as we are, was the conqueror just where I must conquer or give up fellowship with Him."

It was with feelings of relief and of pleasure that George saw the meeting-house yard at the turn of the road, and that he helped Dolly to alight by the women's door and then led his horse away to the shed to tie him there. He was resolved not to take her home with him if he could help it; but he saw that there was small hope that he should have his way.

Dolly waited by the door for Abby and Clayton to come, and while she waited, she watched George striding off across the grass with his hand upon the bridle of the horse. She would ride home with him, she thought, and she did not guess that, while he strove to quell the tumult within him, he thought of that with dismay and foreboding.

"We must walk smartly," said Abby as she and Clayton turned into the street from her garden

gate. "Meeting begins at ten, and there are two full miles to go."

Beneath the shade of the trees they went upon the village side-walk, mounting higher and higher by slow ascent until the boundaries of the town were reached, and then they came out into the open country upon the treeless road. There from the hill-top was the view across the lowlands that had excited Dolly, but Abby would not now consent to tarry that Clayton might look at it.

"Thee may stop as we come back, if thee pleases," she said, "but now I would not be late for Meeting."

So they went downward toward Plymouth, walking together upon the firm earth beside the carriage-way, and both with joy. Abby, indeed, was radiantly happy. The sunshine was glorious. The air was cool and full of the sweetness of the fields; both the man and the woman had youth and health, and the woman's soul was pure. She did not measure nor did she attempt to understand the feeling of exaltation that possessed her. It was a species of intoxication. She saw everything about her in a kind of golden mist. The glory of the light seemed to have a new and strange brilliancy; and all the loveliness of the grass and the fields and the purple hills and the blue sky seemed more lovely than it had ever done. Her step was light and her heart was light. Clayton's talk was full of pleasure for her, and she had always an answer, and many a laugh they had as they strode along. She had never gone to meeting before in such a fashion; and if she had considered, the contrast would have been strange between the high spirits which now upbore her and the tranquillity with which she had been used to traverse this road. But youth does not consider. The new strange joy of the present moment was too intense to be dulled

by serious reflections. She yielded herself to it completely without compunction and foreboding. She could not have expressed the fact in words; she did not even perceive it in clearly defined shape, but into her soul had come that wonderful new life that is born of love. The man and the woman; the woman waiting for the man with longing that she may hardly discern to be longing. The man eager to find that One woman who is his very own, and never contented while he makes quest for her. They meet, and in the silence, behind polite conventions and formal talk, regardless of plans and pre-arrangements, in defiance sometimes of fair reasonableness, each soul leaps to its mate. It is not caprice, it is not carnal passion, it is not just a fancy that might, but for accident, have been directed elsewhere. The wiser man, you say, would have chosen better. The woman who knew the world would have been critical and indifferent. The prudent would have considered circumstance. Well, folly there is and beyond computation, in such matters; folly and recklessness and wickedness. But there are men and women, and innumerable multitudes of them, who meet and are sure once for all, by tokens that cannot be mistaken, that they have come at last to their own. Two prepared for one another. Two that belong together as the sea belongs to the earth. Two for whom there can be no peace but in union, no heaven that will bring separation.

Abby, poor girl, could not on her way to Meeting sound the depths of these things; but as she came with her companion to the meeting-house enclosure, and thought of George and of her past life, she felt as if all that life had been lived in shadow and in dreariness.

The ragged grass, over-running the gravelled

PLYMOUTH MEETING HOUSE.

driveway, was soft to the tread as Abby and Clayton slowly passed the gateway and came into the meeting-house yard. About the enclosure upon the two sides whereby the turnpikes ran was a rough wall of stone capped by wooden roofing, whilst upon another side were carriage sheds, ending at the fence that marked the line where the burial-ground began. The old meeting-house, gray, drawn in straight lines, without trace of ornament, stood in the midst of the great yard, having narrow porches upheld by pillars untouched by lathe or graving tool after the saw had shaped them. Two score sycamore trees reared their wide-girthed trunks from the sward and far aloft waved their spotted branches in the wind while their foliage covered the house and yard with shade.

A few groups of men in the garb of Friends lingered near the building for soft-spoken words, but of those that drove into the yard the larger number helped the women to alight, and then, driving to the shed and tying the horses, returned at once to seek a place in the meeting-house.

Clayton observed that there were no equestrians as he had been used to see them swarming about the churches in Maryland on a Sunday morning. There was no loud conversation, no frivolity in the dress or demeanour of the young men. The boys and girls, the young men and the maidens, were of sober countenance, of homely garb, of quiet behaviour, like the elders. Reverence was not at all a dominant quality in Clayton, but the conduct of these people impressed him. He thought of the Sunday morning scenes about and in his father's church at home: the planters who gathered before the service to talk of crops and politics, the young men who prepared for the sanctuary by discussing horse races and hops and by flirting with the girls

who stood about and passed to and fro in bright attire. The way of the Friends seemed even to him to be better. He knew he should find in the meeting house none of the preparations for tobacco-chewers that were in every pew in the church at home, for nobody about him seemed to be using tobacco. These plain, noiseless folk manifestly had come together for worship; for worship without the help of gauds of music, of colour, of trappings, of furniture; of things that are craved as stimulants by the carnal mind. For them, if worship were to be, there must be the sheer unaided uplift of the secret soul towards the Holy One who seeth in secret and hearkens to the unspoken word.

Clayton did not think closely of these things, but the place and the people at once made upon him an impression of solemnity; but, indeed, if he had reflected, or if his own spirit had been devout, he might have discerned in the serene blue of that cloudless sky, in the glory of the sunshine that covered all the fields, in the sweet scent of the grass, the tender softness of the air, and the blithe songs of the birds in the sycamore trees, beauty enough to satisfy the cravings of the eye that was hungriest for material loveliness.

It was almost a wrong to enter the house of God that bore the lowly shingled roof, whilst the greater house of God, canopied by the infinity of azure and glorious with the sunshine, lay outside the walls calling to worship of Him who made it.

But Friends must act with Friends, and so Abby and Clayton came to a door upon the porch of the meeting house, and Abby turned and said to him, pointing:

"Thee must enter by that door, at the other end."

"But may I not go in and sit by you?" asked Clayton in surprise and disappointment.

Abby smiled gently upon him and said:

"That is not the way of Friends. The women and the men are separated. Thee cannot sit with me and thy sister. I am sorry if thee is not pleased, but thee must go in over there."

Then she turned and went through the doorway with Dolly; and Clayton, looking after her, could see her finding a place upon one of the benches.

Vexed at this practice of separation, which seemed to him completely unreasonable, Clayton sought the door to the men's side of the meeting, resolved, if he could, to occupy a place where he could look at Abby during the hour of worship.

He found a seat from which he could see her plainly, or could glance from her sweet face out through the open doorway to the green yard and past the high sycamores and the stone wall to the fields that rolled in grassy undulations far away toward the Connock hills.

He removed his hat as he sat down. Then, perceiving that he alone had an uncovered head, he doubted for a moment if he should replace his hat, but habit was strong upon him, and he felt that he could not do that. He looked about him. Over there upon the women's side was Abby. She did not turn her head. He knew that she would not look for him, or look about her at all. Next to the west wall three benches were placed, one behind another, the second and the third a little higher than the other. Upon these sat a dozen men, some of them old, all of them venerable, and with them he observed sat George Fotherly. All wore hats with wide brims, all were dressed in grey or brown. All looked straight before them, excepting that two had shut their eyes and one, of advanced years, had his hands clasped over the top of his staff, like Jacob, and his chin resting upon them. He, too,

had shut out the world behind closed eyelids. Close by this group of elders, but separated by a partition opened four feet from the ground, the matrons of Israel sat, the women elders, some in deep bonnets, some in bonnets that revealed the profile; and all in sober garments, with silken kerchiefs folded over the breast. Abby sat directly across the aisle from these honourable women, and when Clayton had looked at the men and the women, at the bare white walls, at the climbing blackness of the pipe that ran from the stove to the chimney hole near to the ceiling, at the unpainted, severely plain benches, and at the glory of the out-of-doors, he turned his eyes to Abby and he kept them there.

There was perfect silence in the room. Through the doorway the sunshine came and shadowed upon the white floor the flickering of the leaves and the sound floated in of the rustling of the foliage upon the sycamores. Or the stamping of an impatient horse upon the earth of the carriage-shed was heard, and the twittering of the birds among the branches of the trees or upon the grass. One venturesome sparrow hopped into the doorway and out again, and soon another darted in upon its wings and flew hither and thither in bewilderment; but none noticed it excepting Clayton, until presently it found an open window and plunged out again to seek its companions.

A dog ran in from the highway and across the green, stopping on the threshold of the meeting-house, lifting a foreleg and looking about him as if doubtful that his master were present; and then a creaking wagon came along the road and went slowly by, its harsh sound magnified by the silence. For a few moments it disturbed the peace until it turned the corner of the road, and the noise fell

away into softness behind the barrier of the carriage sheds.

The meeting sat in quietness for a long time, and Clayton, quite unused to such methods of worship, and hardly perceiving indeed that there was worship, began to wonder if anybody would do anything to disturb the monotony, when suddenly he heard a shrill voice from the benches of the elders announcing a text of Scripture. This utterance ended, an old man of unalluring appearance slowly arose, removed his hat and began to preach. At first Clayton felt an inclination to laugh. The speaker had little heed for the requirements of grammar; his voice was grating, his method of speech a queer sniffing intonation, droning on through a sentence which finished in a drop downward and a leap upward, like a Gregorian chant. The matter of the sermon was not very much better than the manner, and Clayton began to admire the vitality of the spiritual force that could find sustenance in such food.

The speaker ended as suddenly as he had begun, and silence again enveloped the meeting; until presently a man who looked like a worn-out farmhand stood up and with closed eyes made a prayer that thrilled even the soul of the young Southerner, who had not been used to prayer.

This being ended, a woman arose and softly, for three minutes, made a little sermon full of grace and truth and not wanting in the eloquence of feeling.

Then George Fotherly got upon his feet, and in his deep voice said: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or who shall stand in His holy place? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

He spoke slowly, with clear articulation, in flowing sentences, without gesture, but with intonation

that interpreted every shade of meaning. His eyes were wide open, but one perceived that he saw no outward thing; for the spirit that was used to look through them, was turned inward upon itself. It hearkened to the message from the Divine sources of which it had become the interpreter. The lips unconsciously framed into words the promptings of the Spirit, and so this burly farmer, with the roughened face and the calloused hand, filled the homely meeting-house with the splendour of his eloquence. He would not have owned it as *his* eloquence. He had no art, he had had no training in the schools. But he had spiritual grace that found in his musical voice, his strong, handsome countenance and his readiness of utterance power of expression that is rare even among the most gifted of the Friends.

Did the inspiration to choose that theme come to him because of the ride to the meeting-house with the woman whose heart he discerned to be not wholly pure? He could not have answered that question, perhaps. But as he sat there waiting in the solitude and silence of the meeting for the Light to shine through the opened door of his soul, these words of the Poet of Israel poured in upon him and seemed to call to him to speak to the people of God and to the world's people present of the purity that alone can give passport into the holy place.

There is, he said, a holy place; the unclean cannot walk there. To them the glory of the Lord would be thick darkness. It is darkness here, for what to the profane man is the light of God's presence in the soul? He cannot discern it. He scoffs at it. Even here, if it be hallowed by the Divine presence, the soul is the ante-chamber of the celestial palaces. It is then holy. When that presence is shut out then there is black night. The pure in heart shall have the vision of the Almighty because

He is pure—nay, He is purity itself, and like ever goes to like, the clean to the clean, the unclean to the unclean.

The hands? They cannot sin. They are but dead matter. They are tools for doing the work of God or the tasks of Satan. The spiritual nature wields them as its implements. No sin was ever done, but the soul did it. First and last and forever the power to choose between good and evil is there and there alone. When the heart is pure the hands are clean. There can be no separation. To clean the hands alone, to make action and the duties of life right, is impossible. The soul must be filled full of God, and then all the members and all the life will be His. The man to whom this has come, he and he only may ascend the hill of the Lord—he has ascended it. But the loftiest summit perhaps lies beyond. There is a glory for the freed spirit that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

In such fashion the Quaker farmer spoke with his grey eyes open, but open only as if he were in a trance. And all the people hearkened, some with high exultation and some perhaps with shame and mourning and with fear lest they might never scale that height.

Clayton listened to the preacher at first with some curiosity, then with indifference; and finally, fixing his eyes and his mind wholly upon Abby, George's words passed over the young Southerner without making an impression upon his consciousness. He did not even hear them.

Dolly followed the preacher with some sharpness of interest. At the end she could have given a full outline of the discourse, but for her it had absolutely no significance. To have ears and to hear not is to baffle the mightiest gospeller. While

she sat and watched George and caught his words, her mind was busy with the music of his voice, with the play of his intellect, with the manly beauty of his countenance, and with the large, powerful, finely proportioned bulk of his body. Intellectual force and physical force, and grace with force were there; and on the woman's side were acute sensibility to these qualities and admiration for them that kindled and flamed while she looked and listened. The lessons that the preacher teaches usually miss those that need them most. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. You must want to ascend into the hill of the Lord before you can care to learn how to do it.

As for Abby, sitting over there on the woman's side, with her hands meekly folded upon her lap and her eyes downcast, she had been struggling to keep her mind away from Clayton, until George's familiar voice reached her and then she heard him with her heart. Sometimes she felt as if he were soaring away from her and speaking of things unknown, and sometimes as she thought of his love for her she had a dim sense of guiltiness. To feel like a sinner seems to be the sign and token of saintship.

There was silence again when George ended his discourse, and presently the two oldest men in the gallery reached out and clasped hands, and the meeting was ended.

Clayton darted quickly to the door whence Abby came out, and, neglecting his sister, who was caught in the crowd in the house, they strolled through the gateway to the road and thus homeward. So George found Dolly waiting for him, and there was no escape from taking her with him. While he went to the shed for the horse, he found that his vexation was strangely mingled with pleasure. He

would rather go without her and he would have done so with some sort of stern satisfaction; but now that he must go with her he was less than half sorry, and ashamed within himself that he was not sorry altogether.

But she did not guess his feeling in one way or the other, and again she began the pleasant talk as they drove down the turnpike. "It was so nice a meeting," she said, "and so solemn a method of worship"; and then she was bold enough to add: "And the sermon was so good." To which George half savagely replied: "Satan said so to the preacher when he ended."

So she spoke no more of the meeting but of lighter things, and George listened and liked the talk and felt that the talker was charming. Thus they came again to the summit of the road, where the wind blew in strongly from the gap in the hills at Spring Mill, and a gust of it threw off Dolly's hat, and George caught it as it came to him and held it for a moment while she, arranging her hair, prepared to put it on again.

She offered him her hand when at the gate of the parsonage she bade him good-bye and looked at him strongly; and when he had driven across the river and up the hill side to his farm, he led the horse to the stable and put him away. Then climbing to his bedroom, he flung himself upon a chair and, with his hands clenched upon his face, prayed that he who by the Spirit had preached for righteousness, might by the power of that same Spirit be forgiven and be delivered from the horrible power of unrighteousness.

"It was my first meeting," said Clayton, as he and Abby strolled homeward. "It was decorous, but don't you find it dull?"

"One has to be spiritually minded to like it."

"I fear I am not."

"You must try," responded Abby.

"I will," he said, but he did not mean to. "However, I like it ever so much better than Uncle Ponder's services. You can sit still all the time, and then the preacher didn't plead for the Jews."

"George is such a great preacher," said Abby rather proudly.

"Do you say he made no preparation? That he did not know what he should say before he came there? Not a word or a thought?

"I am sure he did not."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Clayton, who was willing to have Abby think him an attentive listener. "Wonderful, too, that you could all worship while sitting there in silence. I know I could not help thinking of worldly things."

They stayed for a while at the hill crest, looking out on the one hand through the gap where the river cleaves the hills as it runs southward, and on the other hand across the wide sweep of the valley where beyond the steeples of the distant country town may be seen the faint blue of the Chester hills. And then they came again down the street and to Abby's home, and she bade him farewell.

"I think the Friends are lovely," he said when he parted from her; and she sought her chamber in a glow of happiness to recall his face and the tones of his voice again and again, and to think of every word that he had said.

CHAPTER IV

AT THE GREY HOUSE

ON Monday afternoon Clayton and Dolly visited Abby, and at her suggestion the three went to the lawn at the back of the house to play croquet. Before they had finished the first game, George Fotherly came galloping up the street upon a stout bay horse, making a fine figure. He halted by the Woolford gate, and dismounting went in to keep an appointment with Abby's father. Of late there had been a money trouble for Isaac, and George had come to him a month or two before, as he had done more than once in preceding years, to lend a helping hand.

Isaac Woolford, like his father and his grandfather, was a manufacturer of iron. At Spring Mill, just a mile down the river from Connock, he had a blast-furnace wherein the ore and the limestone of the neighbourhood and the coal from the upper valley were heaped and fused and melted. Isaac had some skill in the business of smelting ore, but he was not dexterous as a commercial man, and he had involved himself in difficulties. The panic of 1857 almost ruined him; but he struggled valiantly to maintain himself, and had fairly succeeded in reaching moderate prosperity when the Civil War flamed into existence. Other men, with clearer vision, found in the outbreak, which sent prices of commodities of all kinds flying upward, an opportunity that gave them riches. But it was Isaac's misfortune to have been enticed into a contract to supply pig iron for a year to one of his customers at prices still depressed by the influences of 1857; and

now, with coal and limestone and ore and labour becoming more and more costly day after day, there seemed a fair prospect that his losses of the panic-year would be surpassed by those of a year of swift rising values. He was despondent and pressed for money. Always he had found in George a sympathetic friend and helper, and a man, moreover, who knew how to lend money and to deal in money without finding his heart grow hard. A rare man indeed!

George, but a month or two before this visit to Isaac, had bought from him with indifference for everything but Isaac's convenience a tract of farmland of sixty acres on the Ridge Turnpike. It seems to be in the nature of things that when a man does not care if his bargain be good or bad it usually turns out to be good to a remarkable degree; and so it happened that George had not owned the tract long before he discovered that much of it was underlaid by rich deposits of the very ore and limestone that Isaac needed for his furnace. Isaac was not the kind of man to make complaint of his hard fortune in losing this mass of wealth; nor, indeed, was George Fotherly the kind of man to regard with pleasure the profit that had thus come to him unexpectedly. His religion was always in good working order for dealing with worldly things; and while he was a notable preacher, he could practice even better than he could preach. Thus, in this particular case, he felt an obligation of religion, but hardly less imperative, an obligation of heredity, to stand fast by Isaac; for if any Fotherly had ever done a thing that was not clean and wholesome, there was no record of it or memory of it in the county.

None of the Fotherlys had genius or even what is called talent. None of them had ever written books, or performed any large public service. None

had ever showed skill in science or in the fine arts. The name did not often appear in the newspapers, There had been in the family no great capitalist, no daring adventurers, no organizers of huge industrial enterprises. They were quiet people, busy with their own modest concerns, thrifty but generous, given to hospitality; full of kindly interest in the troubles of their neighbours; always regarding the spoken promise as the equivalent in value of the written bond; always accepting spirit as well as letter of their contracts; with no expressed animosities; charitable in judgment when they judged at all; restrained of speech; better at listening than at relating; and with a habit of language which excluded superlatives, expletives and slang; having the plain Yea, Yea and Nay, Nay for its model.

But their shining quality was that uncommon thing misnamed commonsense. This was the guide for their judgment, their words and their conduct, and it was always at their command, in every emergency, an instrument to point them the way to justice, to peace, to business success, and to the high esteem of their fellow men. To possess that quality is a better thing than to have all the powers of genius and the fame that rings around the world. The man who has it comes close to the secret of true blessedness in this troublesome world.

Isaac had been sitting upon his porch waiting for George, and as he saw the big farmer come swiftly up the street, both man and horse having the look of prosperity, he manfully thrust down and out of his soul the mean feeling of envy that arose in him. To the half-crushed man who bears the growing burden of a business that *will not* succeed, the unweighted freedom of him who has been victorious in his affairs seems to have an element of unfairness. To pay when you can pay is so

very easy that he who can discharge all obligation with a cheque can rarely measure the misery, sometimes the despair, of the man who cannot pay.

"I am glad to see thee, George," said Isaac, clasping George's hand. "Sit down."

There was clicking of the croquet balls, and laughter and pleasant talk upon the other side of the house as the two men drew into the far corner of the porch; but George did not hear the sounds; his mind was filled with the matter of his errand. Isaac did not know what it was; nor could he guess when George wrote to him to ask him to be at home this afternoon.

He waited with some curiosity for the visitor to tell the purpose of his visit.

George did not make haste. He spoke of the crops, of the weather, even of the later war news, striking the arm of his chair lightly with his open hand meanwhile, and looking out upon the street or up at the sky. At last he settled himself back in his chair, folded his fingers and put his thumbs together, and then, half shyly, as if he found it somewhat difficult to open the subject, he said:

"Does thee know, Isaac, that we found ore and limestone under the Ridge tract that I bought of thee?"

"Thomas Shorter tells me that thee did."

"The ore is rich, too, they say. I know nothing about ore myself."

"It is good ore," answered Isaac. "Thee will give me a price for it. I can use all thee can take out."

"Hah!" exclaimed George, removing his broad hat and passing his hand across his white forehead. "Thee would not care to buy back the tract from me, would thee?"

Isaac smiled in a sad way, and answered:

"Even if I were willing to take that advantage

THE GREY HOUSE.

of thee, I no longer have the money." He restrained an impulse to say "Nor credit either."

"Thee does not think I knew the beds were there, does thee, when I bought the tract?"

"Thee knows I have no such thought, George. No; surely not."

"No suspicion of it was in my mind. I did not covet the tract, Isaac; thee understood that?"

"Fully. Thee took it for my convenience."

"Well, there was no favour either, for I thought it worth the money."

"And so it was."

"And more, much more," answered George.

"To him that hath shall be given," said Isaac, with the least flavour of bitterness in his mind, but not in his tone. "But I have no thought to complain. Thee is a just man, and thee has dealt most liberally with me."

George seemed to be seeking for the best words in which to express himself.

"But I am not a just man, Isaac, if I buy from thee for a low price that which is worth a high price if thee had known the truth. Suppose there had been a gold mine upon the property?"

"The law would give it to thee, and I would approve the law and have no ill-feeling at thy good fortune."

"Thee and I, Isaac, try to obey a higher and better law. How would the Golden Rule work, does thee suppose, in this case between you and me?"

Isaac laughed lightly and answered:

"That is a rule between two men. We are two, and I say to thee plainly now, if thee asks me to appeal to the Rule, I would have thee keep the tract and sell me the ore at a fair price."

"I won't do it!" answered George, almost sharply.

"Thee has some fantastic notion in thy head? I cannot buy back the land from thee."

"Yes thee can."

"No; as I tell thee, I have spent the money, spent it long ago."

George put his hand into the inside breast pocket of his coat and withdrew a package of papers.

"Thee can buy it, and thee must. Here is a deed transferring the tract to thee again, and here is a mortgage for the money I paid to thee. It will be a loan. Thee will owe it to me, and thee will save enough on the value of the ore to pay the interest. Will thee agree to this?"

Isaac's hand was over his face. For a moment he could not speak.

"Yes, George," he then said.

"Very well, then; we will record the deed and thee will sign the mortgage. No, no! thee must not thank me, Isaac. It would be infamous for me to take thy property for almost nothing. Let us go into the house and find pen and ink; and thee must cheer up, my friend; God will not forsake thee so long as thou art a just man."

The two entered the house, and the game upon the lawn became merrier.

Mrs. Ponder, with knitting in her hands, sat upon the side porch of the parsonage watching the croquet players beyond the fence, and after a while Dr. Ponder, returning from some pastoral calls, came through the front gate and sat beside her. Mrs. Ponder's mind was highly charged with the thought that had occupied her while she sat alone.

"Clayton, birdie, seems to be quite enchanted by Abby, and she, in her quiet way, appears by no means indifferent to him. It would be a lovely match and of such great advantage to Clayton on the one hand and to Abby on the other."

Dr. Ponder addressed his mind to the subject, thus for the first time presented to him. He clasped

his hands over the rotundity of his waistcoat, rotundity out of all proportion to his salary of eight hundred dollars, and meditated. He was a short, chubby man, with thick bushy grey hair and small dark eyes, which blinked and twinkled beneath his hat-rim while his mind worked.

"It would steady Clayton and settle him, and it might be the means of bringing Abby into the church," added Mrs. Ponder.

"Clayton is not in it himself," responded the doctor, not fully contented to have indirect agencies at work to accomplish a feat that he aspired to do single-handed. "And he went to meeting with her last Sunday, in disrespect for me and for the church."

"It was novelty—the novelty of Friends' methods of worship and the charm of Abby's companionship."

"But, wife, how can Clayton's indifference, if not clear unbelief, and Abby's Quakerism, put together, work out into churchmanship? I can't see it."

"Clayton's training and instincts are for the Church. He lacks piety. Abby has piety, but no training or instinct for the Church—not yet, at any rate. Love may fuse the two and make one good churchman."

"If it would do any good to call them over here and read to them that sermon of mine on the Repository of Faith, I might do it; or had I better not speak to each of them separately?"

"No, birdie, let unassisted nature do her work until the time is ripe for interference. He must win her first, and really he seems to be carrying on a vigorous campaign. I wish Dolly's had as bright an outlook."

"Who have you in your mind for her?"

"If George Fotherly could fancy her, he would——"

"My dear! Impossible! She would have to join the Quakers; and the conversion of Abby with the perversion of Dolly would leave us just where

we are. After all our toil and prayers the thing would only come out even."

"Possibly Dolly might swing George around."

"Never!" exclaimed Dr. Ponder, almost angrily. "That man is as set and determined in his unscriptural views as if he were George Fox himself. I gave him up long ago to his strong delusions. Think of a man who actually denies that there is any warrant for my considering myself a priest, and challenges me to produce from the New Testament any authority for it!"

"Did you produce it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"We needn't go into that now. It is enough for me to say that there is actually an element of absurdity in the notion that Dolly can bring that stubborn man over, and even more in the idea that he can make a Quaker of her. I wish she were a better churchwoman and would come to her own church instead of wandering off to meeting as Clayton did."

"She went to hear George preach."

"That's it! Went to hear that unordained young man promulgate error while her own uncle, set apart for the sacred ministry, was preaching a sermon which, if I do say it myself in the privacy of the conjugal relation, had true unction, and would have convinced any fair mind that there is nothing but darkness outside the Apostolic succession. I still think it might perhaps be serviceable if I should read that sermon at family worship to-night. The seed ought to be sown. You might ask Abby to come in with us."

"It would be inopportune, birdie. Let us wait. If Abby is to come into the family I think we can manage her, but as for George——"

"George!" said Dr. Ponder impatiently. "There is no hope for him."

"There he is now," exclaimed Mrs. Ponder, "with Mr. Woolford. Perhaps Dolly has some attraction for him, after all."

When the business had been done between George and Isaac within the house, Isaac led his guest through the back door of the hall to a little porch which snuggled there in the shade. He had not thought of the players upon the lawn, but had considered only that he and George might escape the afternoon warmth and glare of the front porch.

The players did not observe the two men as they came out of the door, and while the game was continued with much glee, Isaac and George stood and watched it. Presently Abby looked up, after striking a ball, and found George's big eyes fastened upon her. They seemed to penetrate to her soul. She spoke sweetly to him, but her cheek flushed, and she tried to cover her feeling by returning to the game and pretending interest in it. Then Dolly saw him and fluttered her hand toward him in a light way, and Clayton looked up and recognized the presence of the man whom he knew only as a preacher.

For a few moments longer the game went on. Isaac withdrew to the house upon an errand of some kind, and George sat upon a rustic seat to watch the players.

He had not expected to find them here. Busy with the thought of his transaction with Isaac, he had hardly reflected that he might meet Abby; but here he was in the presence of both Abby and Dolly, and here was that youth who had taken from him on First-day his accustomed companion in his journey to the meeting-house. He had no pang of jealousy. He did not fear. If peril for him had been suggested by that companionship he would at that moment have put the thought away as foolish. He could not have believed it at all possible

that this worldly and apparently frivolous young man should come between him and the steadfast Quaker girl, of whose love for him he felt very sure.

No, it was not jealousy of Clayton that engaged his mind while he sat there an onlooker of the play. There was, rather, a confused sense of his pure deep love for Abby and of the undeniable attractiveness of the other woman. The feeling that flung him into his chamber on First-day morning to wrestle with evil had become a kind of dim memory. It had spent its force, and here he was again face to face with the very enticement from which he had wished to separate himself upon the ride on First-day, and which had then filled him with alarm. Just now it seemed less dreadful. The girl had grace; her laugh was charming; her figure was graceful; her face was full of innocent beauty; she had about her a suggestion of fervour which made Abby appear cold.

He had an impulse to rise and go away; but the argument for remaining where he was had force. Courtesy to Isaac, regard for Abby, consideration for her guests, the gracelessness of an unexplained retreat, all appealed to him to yield to that strong temptation to stay that was supplied by contemplation of Dolly's personality. He determined to linger for awhile.

Then the game ended, and Abby introduced him to Clayton, and Dolly greeted him as if he were an old friend. To breathe awhile, and for George's sake, they laid down their mallets, and Abby and Clayton sat upon the edge of the porch whilst Dolly took her seat upon the bench by George.

She began at once to urge him to join the game, and when Abby and Clayton added their entreaty, he stood up, half consenting as they gathered about him.

"And you will be my partner, won't you?" demanded Dolly, taking hold of a button upon his coat, as if to fasten herself upon him.

He agreed, and they walked together to their places, George feeling as if that First-day sermon of his were away off somewhere in the half-forgotten past.

"George is actually going to play with them," said Mrs. Ponder, "and on Dolly's side."

Dr. Ponder looked, and made up his mind that Dolly should not go to bed that night without hearing from him at least a part of his famous sermon on the errors of the Quakers.

George played the game, not with the skill of practice, but with the certainty of a strong hand and a clear-seeing eye. Dolly openly exulted in the accuracy of his strokes, and when he and she were out of turn, she stood by him and spoke to him with the freedom of an old companion, so that George could hardly help yielding to her tacit demand upon him for reciprocal freedom and friendliness. Abby's manner towards him had some small measure of restraint, for she was not artful enough to conceal her feeling that a barrier had come between them. She was half-afraid when she considered in her soul how vast a change had come upon her life within the past few days.

When the game was over, Mrs. Ponder summoned Dolly and Abby to the parsonage, and Clayton and George, upon Isaac's invitation, came to sit with him upon the little porch.

It was amost inevitable that, when Clayton spoke of his southern birth and of his home in the south, the conversation should turn at last to the subject of the war.

Clayton could hardly suppress an expression of the insolent disdain with which some of the people of that region, just at that time, were used to regard the North.

"My people," he said, "do not believe the North will really fight."

"They seem to be preparing in earnest to do so," said Isaac. "Friends do not favour war, but thee may perhaps deceive thyself about this matter."

"We are ready for it, in any case," said Clayton. "The Southron is born a fighter. We are proud of it."

"And is fighting the best thing?" inquired George Fotherly.

"It is a good thing, or rather perhaps a necessary thing, sometimes," answered Clayton.

"Is there nothing higher than to vanquish thine enemy and to tear out his heart?"

"It is the manly way."

"I know of something better," said George.

"What is it?"

"To vanquish thyself. To conquer thine own spirit."

"It is the coward's refuge," said Clayton, almost with contempt.

"I think not," responded George. "To fight is sometimes the refuge of the worst of cowards. You cannot conquer a man's soul. Can thee prove slavery right by killing me? or can thee convince me that it is right by forcing me to fly from thee?"

"No," said Clayton; "but where you think a certain policy is right and I think it wrong and neither of us will yield, the appeal to force is necessary if one policy or the other is to be put into operation. You can't convince a thief by argument that honesty is best, but you can lock him up where he can't steal."

"Is not the way of the savage and the brute, just the way thee praises? Fight it out and keep your hand on the throat of the beaten man!"

"It is the method of the savage," replied Clayton, "because no other method is possible. The instinct of the race impels to it. Why shouldn't I

hold you by the throat when, if I let you go, you will throttle me?"

"Has thee ever tried forgiveness?"

"No, and I never will try it where I have been wronged."

"Well," said George, "thee will forgive me if I say to thee plainly thee has yet much to learn. How deeply has thee looked into spiritual things? Believe me there are wonders there. If thee will consider thee will find, I think, that the hater is the chief victim of his own hate, and that the sweetness of revenge is bitterness compared with the joy of conquering thyself."

"Thy fondness for war has not led thee into the rebel army?" remarked Isaac.

Clayton's face flushed and his lips framed a hot answer; but he remembered that this was Abby's father, and perhaps no offence was meant.

"My State has not joined the Confederacy," he said. "My allegiance is to her. If she goes, I will go."

While he spoke Abby came home again, and Clayton withdrew and went over to the parsonage. George declared that he, too, must say farewell, and Abby, half sorry for him, half ready still to persuade him that all her old friendliness remained, walked with him to the gate. He took her hand and said: "Old friends are the best friends, Abby, aren't they? Life would be dark to me but for thy friendship."

Then she watched him mount his horse and wave his hand at her and ride down the street, and the thought that filled all her soul found muttered expression as she said, turning to go into the house, and carrying with her the image of the stalwart horseman:

"But Clayton is beautiful!"

CHAPTER V

BY THE GREAT SPRING

AFTER supper Mrs. Ponder must go to a meeting of women in the parish building, and Dolly was persuaded to go with her. So Clayton, left alone upon the porch with the daylight still far from done, fell to thinking of Abby and wondering if he might venture again that day to visit the grey house. And while he considered he saw the fair Quakeress come out from the front door upon her porch and sit in a chair and smooth out her apron and begin gently to rock to and fro. Father and mother were within, or they might be absent, Clayton thought; but in either case she was alone and he was alone, and to be in her company was the strongest desire in his soul at that moment. He had resolved to go to her, when she arose, and after coming to the edge of the porch and looking at the sky, went down the steps and along the gravelled walk among the flower beds. Clayton called to her. She looked up, and with smiling face answered him. Then he asked if he might come to her, and she said yes; so he leaped the fence and walked with her in and out between the beds and the grass, and then they came to the rustic bench beneath the apple tree and sat upon it.

Over in the west the horizon still had flushes of the glory of the sun that had gone down, but the sky overhead was gray and cool, and the shadows were deepening in the corners behind the house where the trees over-hung. The wood-robin in the

great cherry tree was singing his final song before he made ready for sleep, and here and there amid the shrubs and even high among the foliage of the trees the faint flashing spark of the fireflies told of the coming of the darkness.

"It is the very sweetest time of a summer day, isn't it?" said Abby. "The glare of the sun has gone, and all the tints are softened, and the air is cool and heavy with the odour of the flowers."

"Yes, but the freshness of morning is lovely and the noon is glorious when there is not great heat, and even the darkness has a charm if we are in the mood to find it. We are the children of the earth and the sky and it is good to be out of doors with our kinsfolk the flowers and the shrubs and the stars, and particularly good if we have pleasant company of our nearer human kin. One reason why I like my own Southland is that life in the open air is easier there. Winter touches us harshly sometimes, but where I live the yellow roses grow in giant masses without fear of cold, and the plants that perish here thrive mightily. You have never been in the South, have you?"

"No," answered Abby.

"But you must come and see it. I will have my mother entreat you to come and visit my sister. Our country is strangely different from this. There are no hills. The land is almost flat, but there are rich fields and thick woods and peach orchards, and, better than all, there are rivers and inlets tree-bordered and beautiful to look at, and filled with all manner of life that is good for the hunger of man. If you will come to us we will show you all the country and the bays and the streams and we will have you know the people, the warmest-hearted, bravest, most generous, most chivalrous people in the world, I do believe."

Abby laughed lightly at his enthusiasm and answered:

"Everybody says that of the Southern people, and I am sure I should be glad to know them."

"I don't mean," said Clayton, with a little pang of repentance as he remembered he was speaking to a Northern girl, "that our people have all the virtues. I cannot be blind to the charm of many persons whom I meet in the North, but I do not exaggerate nor does my love for my own people mislead me when I say that they have a warmth of feeling that is not commonly manifested here even though it may exist. And believe me also that I find very, very much, in this region at any rate, that seems to me singularly excellent. You will think me really sincere when I say that in my view the Friends in many things come nearer to being right than any people I know of."

"They are widely different from those that thee has been used to," said Abby. "Some of their ways might repel thee."

"I like the plainness of their dress. How completely unworthy of an intelligent being is the frippery of elaborate costume! I think their speech with that lovely thee and thou more than admirable. Even their worship, which is much too highly spiritual for my poor reach, surely is best if a man can attain to it. And the preaching——! Did you say that Mr. Fotherly has no forethought when he preaches?"

"He speaks when the inspiration comes to him in the meeting, and if it does not come he remains silent."

"Wonderful! That young man without preparation or consideration and without training, actually preaches far better sermons than Uncle Ponder with all his learning and his work with his

pen. Poor Uncle Ponder! I am sure his people go to sleep. Do Friends go to sleep in meeting?"

"I really do not know," said Abby, smiling. "They sit with their eyes shut usually, but I think they sleep very rarely, at any rate."

"And I like your meeting ever so much better than our church at home. It is a little barn of a building, as plain as your meeting-house. The people come to it from all the country round, and stand about beneath the trees, talking politics and business sometimes until the service is half over. Then the men come trooping up the narrow aisle, making a great clatter, and sit in the pews chewing tobacco and dozing while our minister drones along over a tiresome manuscript. The one thing that impressed me most strongly at your meeting, was the reverence of the people. I have not very much of it myself, but surely it is a fitting thing for a place where God is to be worshipped. When I go home I intend to read all about George Fox and William Penn and the other great Quakers."

While he spoke there was a sound in the street of drum and fife, and presently passed by the grey house a company of young men who had been out in the cool of the day drilling. It was a company just now recruited for service in the Federal army. Clayton watched it with a scornful smile upon his face.

"George Fox," he said, "would not have approved of that, would he?"

"No," answered Abby. "Friends are opposed to strife; and oh, Mr. Harley! does it not seem a terrible thing for men who ought to love and be kind to one another to be trying to kill one another instead?"

"It is not nice, certainly," he said, "but sometimes it appears to be necessary."

"This awful war has given the Friends much

perplexity. They cannot approve of fighting, and yet they cannot approve of slavery (forgive me, will thee, for saying that ?), and they do not wish the Union to be broken in pieces. Their part must be to pray for peace and to minister to the sufferers of both sides."

Clayton was conscious that it would be no easy task to commend himself to this Quaker girl while standing fast for the cause of the South, but he said :

"Pardon me, Miss Woolford, but you do not have the notion that the South is fighting for the preservation of slavery, do you ?"

"That is what everybody says : that the Southern people are afraid the negroes will be made free and that they have taken up arms to prevent it."

"It is not so !" said Clayton. "Will you permit me to put the case fairly for you ? The State of Maryland, wherein I live, is a sovereign State. It is a complete political unit, capable of directing its own affairs, of protecting its people, of conducting its own business. When the Union was formed, Maryland joined with the other States in arranging a central general government, and it surrendered to that government, for convenience sake, a few of its own powers. Maryland remained, just what it was before, a solid, immovable political unit, with sole power to manage its affairs, with complete mastery over its own policy, and with positive right to determine if it would or would not take back the powers it surrendered, or rather loaned, to the central government. Maryland never promised not to demand them again ; she did not consent to part with them irretrievably ; she still had her sovereignty and all that belongs to sovereignty. Now, if the central government, overstepping the authority given to it by the States that created it, presumes to meddle with the affairs

of a sovereign State and to restrict the action of the State in a manner to which the State never consented, then the State had a clear right to repent of its agreement with the central government, to take back what it gave, to withdraw from the Union, and to resume its original condition of independence. Maryland has not yet done this, but other Southern States have."

Poor Abby was not learned in these political matters; she had heard the Northern argument many a time, but the Southern view was new to her; and this advocate of the Southern cause was so persuasive.

"But has slavery nothing to do with the quarrel?" she asked.

"This much to do with it," answered Clayton. "If I hold a negro as my property under the laws of my sovereign State, I claim the right to take my property where I will, and I deny the right of the central government or of any other government to set the negro free, or to forbid me to go to this place or that with him, or to permit any man or body of men to harass me because I have such property. As for slavery itself, that is quite another matter. I know you do not approve of it and perhaps that you think hardly of me because I speak for the cause of the slave-holders. I tell you plainly that I do not like it. The South is most unfortunate in being burdened with it. I know we should be far better off if the blacks were sent back to Africa or swept into the sea. But we did not bring the blacks to our country, we did not enslave them; we cannot return them to Africa or thrust them into the ocean; we cannot free them without peril to us and to them. The negro is here; slavery is here; we must accept the fact as it stands. As it does stand our rights are absolute, and the central

government and the free states have no more right to meddle with it than I have to interfere in your father's household. This horrible war, thus begun, is a war of aggression, of usurpation. We will fight it to the death. Your people do not know my people. The Southerner is a horseman, a man used to arms from his youth; a man of high courage, ardent, daring, a soldier by nature. Even if the North shall really fight, the war will be short; the South is sure to win. Imagine a band of Southern gentlemen opposed to such a body as that which just now went down the street." Clayton laughed scornfully, but plainly Abby was not pleased at such a comparison, so he said further:

"Of course, what I mean is that skill must win the victory. How can a group of raw young men, many of whom never handled a firearm, stand before a body of highly-trained soldiers?"

"Thy State has not seceded from the Union," said Abby with a thought in her heart that she should be sorry to have this man become a soldier.

"Not yet, and perhaps force may be used to compel her to stay in the Union; but they cannot prevent that her sons should cast in their lot with their brethren of the South."

Abby remained silent for a moment while the question in her heart trembled on her lips:

"But thee will not go, will thee?" she asked.

"I have always intended to go," he answered, "but now——" He hesitated to complete the sentence. He could not dare to speak his mind upon the subject. Now indeed, a new person and a new thing had come into his life, and all his plans were overturned, all his thoughts were changed, all his purposes ran in a new direction. The cause of the South called less clamorously to him, for the strongest passion that comes to the soul of man

called him to the North. So then, after a moment's pause for swift thought, he said :

"But now perhaps I may find that my duty lies along the ways of peace."

He looked at her as he spoke, and it seemed to her that she saw in his eyes the thought he could not venture to utter, and then her own eyes were turned to the ground.

When the darkness began to fall about them and the moment was near when they must go to the house where others would be with them, Clayton's mind was fixed that he would arrange to spend at least a portion of the morrow with Abby. His stay in Connock would be brief, and he felt that he cared for nothing so much as for the companionship of this Quaker girl. He talked with her therefore of walks that might be taken, and when Abby suggested that the North Lane was beautiful, and that at its end lay her father's furnace and a lovely stretch of the river, both worth seeing, it was agreed that Abby and Dolly and Clayton should go thither in the morning.

"In the afternoon," Abby said, "thy aunt has asked me to drive with thee and thy sister to George's farm. She will ask him to let them have the picnic for the Sunday School in his woods."

Thus when Clayton parted from Abby there was for both of them the assurance that for still another day they were to be together.

In the morning Dolly was half reluctant to go down the North Lane.

"Why didn't we send for Mr. Fotherly to join us ?" she asked, with clear perception that Clayton would much rather have Abby to himself. But George had not been asked, and Abby protested her unwillingness to go without Dolly, and so at last the three strolled up the main street and then

out to the turnpike road that began at the top of the hill. The sky was overcast, but the air was clear enough to permit the eye to reach the farthest limit of the landscape. Half a mile or more from the town the young women and their companion under Abby's guidance turned into a hedge-rimmed lane with here and there a great tree reaching its branches across the drive-way. The hedges were so high and the lane so crooked that the pedestrian could see nothing but the foliage about him and the grey sky overhead. But presently the party came to the end of a turn in the road where the descent towards the river began.

"Look!" exclaimed Abby, pointing downward.

The lovely neighbourhood of Connock has no scene finer than that which lay below them. The river, flowing for a time upon a line at right angles with this North Lane, suddenly turns at Spring Mill, and runs as if it were a direct continuation of the lane. The hills upon either side have their greatest height where the turn is made, and looking far to the southward through the gap the stream resembles a narrow lake stretching away until it loses itself in the misty distance.. Down amid the gleaming of the water a green island lies low, covered with trees and giving to the view the last touch that brings it to the level of perfect beauty.

"Many a famous landscape in Europe is not so beautiful," said Dolly; "and to think that nobody ever heard of this one before!"

"But it is famous hereabouts," said Abby, smiling. "We do not let the world hear us boast of it."

"I have seen Loch Katrine," said Clayton, "and it is not more charming."

"But it has been well advertised," added Dolly.

"The Scottish hills are not wooded," continued Clayton, "and that makes them inferior to these

glorious hills; and the river, in which the hills are mirrored, is as lovely as Katrine ever was!"

The decline of the road became more steep, as the pedestrians came nearer to the river. But before reaching the stream, Abby turned to the left and led her companions over a bridge that lay athwart a swift-running brook of transparent water. Then their way was across a meadow covered by rank grass to a grove whereby a great pool swelled between its banks of sod, and fed the rivulet with its overflow.

They came near and looked into the almost circular basin. The shadowed water had no secrets. The sandy bottom could be seen plainly, and from it in a score of places the water oozed and bubbled continuously. It is a mighty spring, fed from the hidden channels of the limestone hills all about it, and gushing forth its waters in undiminished volume even when drought lies long upon the land.

The clustering willow trees, the clear pool, the grassy hollows of the grove make it a place of rest and peace. Near by a band of gipsies had come with sure knowledge of the fitness of the place for them, and Dolly was filled with curiosity to see them. Abby had timidity, but Clayton was brave and Dolly was positive, and so they walked across the meadow to the edge of the camp.

There were queer wagons and many horses, and gaudy colouring upon the women's dresses and the tent equipage; and upon the ground were cooking utensils and other articles of convenience.

"Their preference," said Clayton, when he had looked at them for a moment, "apparently is to be near the water, but not too near."

"Not caring for godliness," said Dolly, "I suppose they are careless also about its next door neighbour."

"I am sorry for them that they should live so forlornly," was the comment made by Abby.

The vagrants were not indifferent to the presence of their visitors. The men who lounged by the fires looked sharply at the young women and spoke among themselves in low tones. Then an old woman came forward and greeted them; an offensive person in her visage, her dress and her general dishevelment.

Clayton was inclined to banter her, but she did not heed his words. Whatever the measure of her degradation she could not be made ridiculous.

"Let me tell the fortunes of the ladies and the gentleman?" she said.

"No, no," whispered Abby to Dolly; "do not have her do that."

But Dolly would have it. "Oh, yes," she said, "let her do it. It will be good fun. Of course it is all nonsense. Shan't we try it, Clayt?"

"If you wish. The investment will be small, and the enlargement of our stock of information smaller."

"I will tell you truly," the woman said. "You do not guess my power."

"I do not like such things," said Abby softly to Dolly. She had a feeling of dread as she looked at the woman's hard, almost malignant face.

"Pooh, my dear!" responded Dolly. "It is folly, of course, but there can be no harm. I am greatly interested. She is the first gipsy woman I have seen."

"I will take the gentleman first," said the woman, possibly with a purpose to put the transaction upon a perfectly safe financial basis at the beginning. She took Clayton's hand and looked at it. Then she stooped, and dipping some water from the brook poured it into the hollow of his palm.

"Look there," she said. "Do you see anything?"

"Nothing but water," he answered, when he had glanced at it.

The woman looked again, and then moving so that he would stand between her and his companions, she whispered:

"But I see something. I see you lying dead upon the ground with your face white and a great hole torn in your breast."

There was that in the woman's manner which gave to Clayton a little shock of pain. He turned his hand and wiped it upon his handkerchief, and laughed as if he would appear indifferent. He would have preferred to end the performance, but the woman had taken Abby's hand, and Abby shuddered a little at the touch. Then the sybil poured water in the open palm as she had done with Clayton, and looked long.

"What do you see?" demanded Dolly.

The woman did not heed the question. Leaning over, she said, so that Abby alone could hear:

"You will die, my poor dear, with a broken heart."

Abby was ashamed to care, but she could hardly restrain her tears. She could not believe that this vagabond woman should know the future, but somehow the words thus spoken found a strange response in her own mind.

"Let us go," she said, turning away and walking for a pace or two.

"Not until I have my turn," said Dolly. "What did she say to you two? I shall insist upon knowing; and I must know my fate also. Here," she said, holding her open hand toward the woman.

The gipsy gazed upon her palm and put water there, and looked long, and then she went to Clayton and thrust at him the money he had given her. He would not take it.

"What is my fortune?" demanded Dolly.

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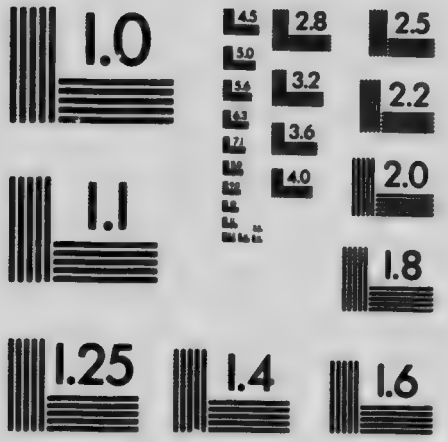

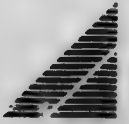

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The woman took the silver coin and whirled it into the air. It fell into the depth of the spring and lay there gleaming white.

"I will not tell you!" she said to Dolly, and then she strode away to the camp and was lost amid the wagons.

Dolly was vexed and Clayton felt angry with himself that he should be depressed by the woman's prophecy, but Abby turned and walked toward the river as if she wished to separate herself from the scene.

"You will not tell me what the wretched creature said to you, Clayt?" asked Dolly.

"Nothing but nonsense," he answered. "It is not worth repeating; and Miss Woolford has been displeased by it. I am sorry we encountered the woman. Let us speak no more of the matter. But I will tell you after a while what she said to me—that is, if I can remember it."

While Clayton spoke lightly of the scene that had passed and Dolly began some cheerful talk, they came to the little bridge, and when they had passed over, Clayton with a laugh exclaimed:

"Now we are safe! You know you can always break a witch's spell by crossing running water. Good Quakers and good church people ought to let Satan's friends alone. We shall tell Uncle Ponder, and he will give us a powerful sermon with the Witch of Endor for a text."

But somehow Abby could not find herself in harmony with this jesting spirit, and so in silence she led her friends around and across the mill-race to the ground, covered by crushed cinder, whereon the great furnace stood.

In the office Abby met her father, busy with his accounts and having worry written upon his face. He was gracious to his visitors, but too much engaged

to give them attention, so he called a workman and told him to show them what was worth seeing.

To Dolly all of it was worth seeing; the heaps of ore and coal and limestone carried to the top of the furnace and hurled into the flaming pit below; the grimy men who toiled above, where the burning gas jetted from the open door; the soughing of the blowers that with their hot breath fanned the burning mass within the stack; and then the scene in the casting room where the fluid iron poured forth and ran along the channels to the moulds, filling the chamber with furious heat and ill-smelling vapour.

The two girls and Clayton were glad to come again into the open air where they could look up at the mighty stack above them and watch in the low-roofed house the swift movements of the great engine.

"It sounds like the panting of some colossal beast," said Dolly, as the blowers slowly forced the air into the stack. "Sigh after sigh, sigh after sigh, as if the monster were in dreadful pain. I have heard it every night since I came here, and knew not what it was. I should become melancholy if I heard it always. It makes me think of hell."

"Thee would become used to it," said Abby. "I never hear it any more. And then," she added lightly, "I could not think it mournful. It means bread and butter for us."

"And it means more than that," said Clayton gravely. "It means strength for the North in the war that has begun. If the South shall be beaten it will be by these great industries that it has neglected while the North has multiplied them."

"Our poor furnace," answered Abby, "is for peace and blessing. It makes iron for useful industry. I pray that none of it may become shot or shell to slay our brethren."

Then they turned and walked homeward, part of the way by the brink of the river; and while Clayton could not help thinking of the gipsy woman's evil words and of the possibility that iron from that very furnace might, strangely, help to the fulfilment of her prophecy, Abby found her mind lingering over the words spoken to her.

When she had parted from her friends and shut her chamber door upon them and her mother, she could not be rid of foreboding. A week ago the thought that her heart would break was far from her; but now? She remembered the sad, anxious face of her father and his business troubles; she considered the terrible war that menaced her country; she reflected that this man who had suddenly transformed her life might not care for her; or if he should care for her, that she could have him for her own only at the cost of separating herself from the Friends she loved so much. And George! If her heart was to be sorrow-smitten until it should break, what would be his doom, the man who had always loved her and she knew would endure anguish if she were lost to him? She was filled with pain as she thought of him; but when she looked deeply in her soul she saw there with perfect clearness something mightier than the fear that enshrouded her; and she felt sure finally that love was her master, and that she should hold fast to it and be faithful to it though all the rest of her life should become hopeless, black disaster.

She spent the afternoon in her room and in helping her mother with the house duties. After tea Dolly and Clayton came again to propose a game of croquet, and while the young people played, Dr. and Mrs. Ponder sat upon their porch. The doctor was glad to have an opportunity to speak alone with his wife.

The land was full of the sounds of war and of the movements of armies, and Dr. Ponder had had a summons to play a part in the military operations.

"My dear," he said as soon as they were seated, "something strange has happened to me. I have been offered the chaplaincy of Colonel Boulter's regiment which is now organizing at Wyncote."

Mrs. Ponder had a little shock of surprise and alarm.

"But you haven't accepted it?"

"No; the offer was made to me only this afternoon. We shall have plenty of time to consider it. The salary is fifteen hundred dollars."

"I don't care for that," said Mrs. Ponder. "I think of the danger for you."

"Nor do I care much for it, although I do not despise the money. As for the danger, it must be hardly worth considering. You will believe me, wife, I wish to be guided solely by perception of duty. Can I be of more service to my master there than here?"

"Believe you, birdie! You never think of yourself at all. It would be terrible for me to let you go, but I am willing to make the sacrifice if your country needs you. Do chaplains wear uniforms?"

"Yes."

"You would be beautiful in a uniform. I should be proud to see you in it. But you are almost too stout, I should think, for marching."

"As a staff-officer the chaplain, I believe, rides a horse."

"But we have no horse."

Dr. Ponder laughed and said, "No doubt the government or patriotic citizens or somebody supplies a good horse; but really, wife, I am rather afraid I can't ride very well."

"I am sure you can with a little practice."

"Are you willing that I should take the place, or would it be better, do you think, for me to refuse it? I have no plans. I feel an impulse to go, but that may be because of the novelty of the experience, or because the whole country is filled with enthusiasm about the army. Let us talk it over calmly."

"You would have no vestrymen or accounting wardens to bother with. That is one good thing about it," said Mrs. Ponder.

"I do not care so much for that. I cannot reasonably complain very much of my vestry. One of my doubts is if I can preach effectively to rough and heedless soldiers."

"Nobody can do it any better."

"Do you think they would care very much about the Captivity and the Lost Tribes?"

"I should certainly think so. Soldiers are reasonable beings. Then you can preach about Joshua and David and Gideon and all the other fighters. The story of David and Goliath could be made very interesting and profitable to them, I am sure."

"Cornelius the Centurion was a soldier, too."

"Yes, and Sennacherib."

"But he was on the wrong side, you remember!"

"I know, but you could use him as a warning. He is a very striking example, it seems to me."

"Of what?"

"Well, of several things; just an example."

"I suppose I could hardly go into Erastianism with the soldiers."

"I don't see why not. No doubt many of them are far from being rooted and grounded in the truth. But, birdie, I think you ought to have command of something. A rector and a member of the sacred ministry is entitled to exercise positive authority. Do chaplains say to this man go and he goeth; and to another man do this and he doeth it?"

"They exercise only religious authority, and that is enough for me and for my sacred office."

"But I remember Muhlenberg in the Revolution, how he preached a patriotic sermon, and then threw off his gown showing his uniform underneath, and dashing from the pulpit led his congregation into the fray."

"It was grand!" replied the doctor. "But a thing of that kind is much too dramatic for me; and besides, very few in my congregation want to enter the service. In fact, my talents are not military, though I hope I am a good fighter against Satan."

"You are one of his most formidable opponents. Have you spoken to any member of the vestry about it?"

"To Mr. Togg only; and he said very emphatically 'Go!' But I fear, my dear, he would not be sorry to be rid of me. He said I would make a splendid fighting parson."

"I can't bear the man! Why doesn't he go himself if he is so anxious to have people go? If you go he will have a younger man called in your place and you will never be received here again."

"That is a point of the first importance. If I enter the army I must leave you alone; then, when the war is over, I may have much trouble to get another parish; and besides, I am half afraid I am too old for military service. Under the best circumstances it must be hard. How would it do to compromise by accepting the position of honorary chaplain to the Connock Home Guard that drills down on the river meadow every night? I could have experience in that way, and learn if the work suited me."

"But it would be hardly worth while to preach

to them about Gideon and Sennacherib. They will never be in a battle."

"Not unless the rebels invade Connock. But maybe if I were chaplain I could get them to come to church on Sundays. Not one of them comes now."

Mrs. Ponder could see no objection to the acceptance of the chaplaincy of the Home Guard, and although the chaplaincy in Colonel Boulter's regiment had in it some elements of attractiveness, she concluded that she could hardly bear to have the doctor give up his present charge, and move her from her home and face the perils of the field of war.

"Very well, then," said Dr. Ponder, "we will put the matter by—for the present, at any rate. But, wife, sometimes I fear my people here are becoming tired of me. That would be an awful thing, wouldn't it? I notice an air of weariness occasionally in the congregation. Alfred Togg yawned constantly during the sermon last Sunday, and Mr. Duckett frequently sleeps."

"Little vessels are soon filled," answered Mrs. Ponder.

The doctor remained silent for a few moments, and then he said:

"What will happen to us, wife, when I am turned out and left helpless, as numbers of my brethren have been? I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed. Many of them have children to care for them, but we——"

Dr. Ponder's voice quavered and broke. Mrs. Ponder moved her chair over by his side and took his hand in hers. She had had her own misgivings about the future, but she said cheerily:

"'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' That is the promise, birdie; the promise to us, and we have no right to fear as we look to the future."

"And He is faithful that promised," said the doctor. "He has always blessed us and He will bless us still. Perhaps He will call me to Himself before I shall be cast out, and then there will be peace. If you could go with me I should be glad to have the summons come."

Mrs. Ponder leaned over and kissed him.

"God will permit us to go together, I am sure. You would not be happy in heaven without me."

"No," he said; "no, I cannot conceive of happiness even there without you; and if we cannot go together, one of us will wait for the other. Do you think there will be any tears there, dearest?"

"The Bible says there will be none."

"It says that God shall wipe away all tears, and so there must be some at the beginning. If you were there and I had waited long to join you, I should have to cry a little just for joy when I first met you again. Then there would be no more."

When love is the theme, young lovers are the favourites for its embodiment and illustration; but the lovers long married and not far from translation to that place where everything is love, are not unworthy of a share of sympathy.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

DR. PONDER'S custom had been to take his Sunday School upon a picnic on every Fourth of July, and when in 1861 the first of the four dreadful battle-summers of the Civil War began, the doctor was more resolute than ever that the little lambs of his fold should celebrate with joyousness and patriotic fervour the anniversary of the birth-day of American liberty. Upon Mrs. Ponder devolved the duty of making preparation for the festivity, and when she had considered where a fitting place for it might be found, she resolved to ask the Quaker, George Fotherly, if his woods might not be used to give pleasure to the children of the church.

"I want you and Abby and Clayton to drive over there with me, Dolly dear," she said to her niece. It is a delightful drive, and George's place is charming."

"I shall be glad to go," said Dolly.

"But first," said Mrs. Ponder, "I must ask Mrs. Woolford to let me have their horse and two-seated carriage, and Clayton can drive. It is really too bad, my dear, isn't it, that we have to depend upon the kindness of our neighbours for a conveyance? In uncle's first parish the vestry supplied him with a horse and carriage so that he could visit his flock in the outlying districts. To be sure, the horse was not showy. In fact he was in a degree decrepit, and Senator Wigger vulgarly alluded to

him in uncle's presence as a glandered ruin; but the horse did move, if with difficulty, and the carriage, though forlorn, had wheels that would actually go around; but in uncle's present parish he must walk or hire or borrow from his friends."

"Clayton will hire a horse and carriage, auntie, I am sure," said Dolly, "rather than have you feel badly about borrowing. In fact, I should much rather have him do so."

"No, my love," answered Mrs. Ponder, "we will borrow, so as to make a kind of protest against the theory of the Quakers that we have 'a hireling ministry' who enrich themselves at the expense of their flocks. Your uncle, with his fine powers, would have been a millionaire, I am sure, if he had taken up the law or almost any other secular employment. His life is a perpetual sacrifice. The labourer is indeed worthy of his hire, and this particular kind of labourer is worthy of much more hire than he gets. We emphasize this fact to th Quakers every time we borrow their horses."

"I think the church should get a horse and a proper conveyance for the rector," said Dolly. "It is humiliating for him to be placed in such a position."

"Precisely!" exclaimed Mrs. Ponder. "Do you really believe, Dolly, that if the first Christians had been as rich as those of our day they would have permitted St. Paul to walk? I don't believe it. I am sure the church in Antioch would have given him a horse and buggy—that is, if there were buggies in those days; perhaps I ought to say a chariot—they rode about, I think, in chariots; the Ethiopian eunuch did, anyhow."

Mrs. Woolford was willing to lend her carriage, and so, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Clayton with Mrs. Ponder and the two girls drove across the

river bridge, and then, turning to the left, entered the deep shadows of the Aramink gorge that winds in and out among the hills until it ends upon the high plateau of the summit.

Mrs. Ponder's mind as she rode along was upon the coming picnic.

"I am almost sure Mr. Fotherly will let us use his woods," she said. "He is a kind man and should be glad to give happiness to little children. It *is* happiness, I suppose, but sometimes I am not perfectly satisfied about Sunday School picnics. The early church never had any, and the Fourth of July is not in the church calendar; and, at any rate, it seems really queer to mix up religion and patriotism and lemonade and sandwiches in the children's minds and stomachs. Is it any wonder some of them do not have clear views when they grow up?"

"There is George, now!" exclaimed Abby when the carriage came to a turn in the road at the upper end of the gorge.

In a field above the level of the road, George Fotherly was at work with a dozen labourers. He wore just shirt and trousers and a broad straw hat, and his sleeves were rolled almost to his elbows. In his hand was a rake. The master and the men toiled together.

When Mrs. Ponder called him he came forward with a smile upon his face and, without lifting his hat, greeted the people in the carriage. He asked them to alight, and when they would not he leaned his arms upon the fence-top in the shade of a great chestnut tree while he talked with them.

His figure was in clear relief against the sky as he stood above them, and Dolly was not indifferent to the charm of the strong, erect, manly form, with the broad arms, the bare throat visible to

his chest, and the handsome sun-burned face with the deep brown eyes. She did not cease to look closely at him while he stayed there.

George needed no urging to grant Mrs. Ponder's request. He said he should be glad to have the children come to the woods, and he should be glad to be there with them if he might. Mrs. Ponder asked him to come; and Dolly thought within herself that this Sunday School picnic really might not be so stupid after all.

Then George asked Mrs. Ponder if she would like to visit the woods, and when she said she would, he lay down his rake and leaped the fence, and coming into the road walked by the side of the carriage close to Dolly. She chatted gaily with him, and when the bars were down and the woods were reached he lifted her out and helped Mrs. Ponder and Abby to descend, and they moved among the trees to choose the place where the tables should be fixed.

George led them to the side of a swift little brook that bubbled from the earth in a hollow and then went dancing down the hillside. Mrs. Ponder said the place was a delightful one for a picnic, and when George had promised to provide the tables and some chairs and to bring his men to help, he put Mrs. Ponder and the girls into the carriage, and as they drove off up the road to return home by the Gulf Gap, he went back to work again.

"It seems so odd," said Dolly, when George had been left behind, "to see Mr. Fotherly actually working with his own hands in the fields."

"Odd, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Ponder.

"I think it is all right, auntie," said Dolly quickly, remembering Abby's presence; "but you know with us a gentleman like Mr. Fotherly never would do a stroke of work in the field. Only the servants

do that. And then it is so queer, too, isn't it, Clayton, to see no black people harvesting? In our country the field would swarm with blacks, and the overseer would be sitting upon his horse watching them and cracking his whip at them."

"Does thee not like our way better?" asked Abby.

Dolly laughed and took Abby's hand in hers.

"All of us like our own ways better, dear; but Mr. Fotherly is a fine gentleman, no matter where he is or what he does."

On the morning of the picnic Mrs. Ponder with a palm-leaf fan in her hand, for the air was very warm, stood by the porch railing at the front of the parsonage watching the teachers and the children gather upon the church pavement beneath the trees. Dr. Ponder, Clayton, Dolly and Abby sat upon the far side of the porch waiting for the Sunday School folks to start. Mrs. Ponder was the commander of the expedition. With her fan in rapid motion, she noted the new arrivals, she instructed the sexton about the collection of the baskets of provisions so that they might readily be put upon the wagon; she congratulated the teachers upon the fairness of the day; she commended the good little girls and she reproved the unruly little boys.

The boys were disposed to be restless, noisy and quarrelsome until the wagon came to take the baskets, and then Mrs. Ponder summoned them to help the sexton load the wagon. This was done by the time the other wagons came, and then Mrs. Ponder had to employ her severest manner and the greatest activity to restrain the boys from climbing in before the girls were seated. Clayton came to help her, and soon nearly all the scholars and all the teachers had found places. Mrs. Ponder,

putting her fan under her elbow and wiping her face, which had grown very red, said to the Sunday School before the start was made:

"Now, children, there are to be no fire-crackers. We are told to 'make a joyful noise,' but the noise of fire-crackers is not a bit joyful; it always makes me jump; and then they are very, very dangerous and smell dreadfully."

Mrs. Ponder had hardly ceased speaking and was just turning to say good-bye to her husband and friends on the porch, when Randy Jones, of the Willing Helpers, exploded half a pack of fire-crackers on the other side of the basket-wagon, causing the horse to plunge in a threatening manner. Mrs. Ponder was very angry. She turned again and tried vainly to catch Randy, and she declared he should stay at home; but he insisted that the crackers had gone off by accident, and then he climbed up to ride with the driver of the wagon. He seemed so firmly established there, and he was so high, and Mrs. Ponder was so warm and so tender-hearted at that moment, that she concluded to overlook the incident.

The wagons were crowded, although an extra wagon had been ordered for fear there should not be room enough.

"It is really wonderful," said Mrs. Ponder to the teacher of the Busy Workers who was to ride with her upon the hind seat of the last wagon, "how the number of scholars in our school always swells just before the Fourth of July picnic and the Christmas festival."

While the wagons rolled down the main street of Connock the girls sang patriotic songs and the boys dropped lighted fire-crackers. In half an hour the woods were reached. George was there to greet his visitors and to learn from Mrs. Ponder

that the doctor would drive over at once with Abby and Dolly and Clayton.

George and his men had four great tables ready, and there were swings upon some of the tall trees and chairs for the older folks to rest comfortably upon.

The children at once spread through the woods and began to play in the shallow brook until the great bowl was filled with lemonade and put upon the end of the longest table; then the young people swarmed about it and refreshed themselves with the iced drink. Mrs. Ponder feared for Randy Jones when she saw him take his fourth glassful, and she drove him away, but Randy's own conviction was that his capacity was heartlessly underestimated.

The teachers unpacked the baskets and arranged the provender upon the tables as the children had more and more fun. Dr. Ponder arrived with his young friends; and George, helping the ladies to alight, sent the horse away to his stable. The doctor thanked George heartily for giving his woods for the picnic, and after pointing out to him that it was really a modern form of the Feast of Tabernacles, asked him to partake of the repast.

While the doctor talked with George, Bud Maguire, of the Cheerful Givers, and Tommy Fowler, of the Band of Love, became involved in combat over a question of swinging one of the little girls, and for a few moments behaved in a disgraceful manner. When George and Clayton with difficulty had torn them asunder and brought them battered and dishevelled to Dr. Ponder, the doctor spoke to them in his severest manner, reminding them of Cain and Abel, and turned them over to the sexton with strict orders to confine the Cheerful Giver in one wagon and the member of the Band of Love in another, depriving both of food and drink.

But when the dinner was spread and the diners were summoned, and Dr. Ponder began to say the grace, in which he breathed new aspirations for the children of Israel, both the combatants were beside their teachers, and both were peaceable, hungry and hopeful.

There was more than enough food, and all the boys seemed to feel a solemn obligation to reduce the dimensions of the surplus. Mrs. Ponder, having had her attention called early in the day to the thirst of Randy Jones, could not help singling him out from the other children and noting that, apart from sandwiches and other solid provender, this sturdy member of the Willing Helpers had had two large slices of water-melon and had been helped four times to ice-cream. Then after making himself fairly bulge with cake, he moved towards the lemonade bowl and would have done fresh duty there, had not Mrs. Ponder dexterously and firmly headed him off.

"I cannot understand it," she said to the teacher of the Busy Workers. "He still seems perfectly well, and he is such a very small boy, too. His appetite is really supernatural."

When the children had eaten and were full—much too full, Mrs. Ponder thought of some of them—Dr. Ponder rapped upon the table and asked that there should be silence. Some of the older boys, with experience in Dr. Ponder's Sunday School and at his picnics, slipped beneath the table and crept away.

The doctor was not the man to slight so good an opportunity as this to edify and enlighten. He spoke about the day—the anniversary so glorious for Americans, and of how it reminded him of the wonderful night when the Chosen People had been brought forth to liberty and to blessing. He ex-

plained how it was that the Ten Tribes happened, long subsequently, to be lost; and then he told what had become of them and how we had found them, and how some of the Chosen People at that very moment, once lost, now found, were sitting around the festal board in the Fotherly woods replete with nourishment.

Then the doctor turned away back into history and by some means wandered to Cush, and expended no little energy for a few moments in explaining why he believed there had been a primeval Cush as well as a post-diluvian Cush, and how the fact of two Cushes having lived, complicated by the fact that there was a country named Cush (which Dr. Ponder said he was sure he knew, and would at some time prove conclusively, was Abyssinia) had confused the minds of the unlearned.

"And no wonder!" said Clayton to Abby.

After a while the doctor worked his way down again through the generations and at last got to Erastianism, which he spoke of with indignant fervour, showing to the Busy Workers and Cheerful Givers and Willing Helpers who sat before him charged with sandwiches and cake and watermelon, that one of the certain tests of true Americanism is bitter hostility to Erastianism in all its forms, and calling upon the young folks as loyal [illegible]n of the church, not less than as heirs to the glories of the Republic, to put their little feet firmly down NOW and lift up their hands and pledge themselves to resist Erastianism to the death.

The intermittent explosion of fire-crackers over by the brook by the boys who fled when they found the sermon coming, irritated the doctor to some extent, but did not stem the torrent of his talk.

And when he had firmly clenched in the young minds hatred of Erastianism, the doctor really

could not help expressing to the scholars, sleepy as some of them looked, his deep and permanent regret that some of our worthy neighbours, people that we love and honour, and who are willing to make us their guests and to help us to have innocent pleasure, persist in closing their eyes to the Truth and in remaining outside the church.

Poor little Sunday School children! They have to endure so much, and they are so patient and long-suffering. They look sometimes as if they wondered at the folks who talk and talk to them about things not to be understood, but they never bear malice for it. They seem to accept the speakers and the speeches as part of the mysterious dismalness which comes into life now and then, like hard lessons and earache. They know the talk will stop some time or other, and so they bear it and try to seem cheerful, and never have a thought of hating the big people who make them suffer. Does it not really seem a matter of mere justice that more than half the people in heaven are children?

Mrs. Ponder did not find the doctor's address tiresome or inappropriate; but she did say to the teacher of the Men's Bible Class:

"We have too many sermons for the young. I do wish the doctor would preach more sermons for the old. They are much more wicked and in need of reproof."

Randy Jones, excluded from access to the lemonade bowl, turned to fire-crackers. In a moment of absent-mindedness, caused probably by his gorged physical condition, he put a piece of lighted punk into his pocket and set his clothes afire. Clayton, who was nearest to him, seized him promptly and plunged him into the creek, whence he was withdrawn extinguished and dripping, but looking fairly happy, and ready for either fireworks or food.

When the after-dinner games began, Dolly asked George to show to her his farm buildings, whose praise she had heard from her aunt and uncle, and while Abby strolled away with Clayton around the hillside and down the path that led to the thicker forest overhanging the river, Dolly and George faced the other way towards the hill-top. There was a winding road that rose by easy gradients towards the farm-buildings, but there was a shorter way through the dead leaves that lay upon the steep bank a hundred yards from the picnic ground, and Dolly said she would go there if George were willing. And so he must step upward first, and holding her hand, lift her bravely from one level to another, until the border of the wood was reached. Then there was but a short walk across a mown field amid the stubble to the farmyard gate.

The girl was joyful to be with this man, and she talked to him lightly and with bright humour; but in her heart she was half afraid of him. He was not just like any other man she had ever met. His manners were perfect, he talked well and he seemed to enjoy a bit of fun; but she was conscious that he was above her in every way; and that the giant body was the true symbol of the spirit that lay hidden within.

There is a masterful man who dominates fate and circumstance, and George was such a man. His will is stronger than the force that retards and makes for failure. Resolute, open-eyed, sure, he controls his business and his destiny. When he takes up commerce he becomes rich. When he deals with religion, he proceeds almost without wavering towards holiness.

And there is a man, like Isaac Woolford, for whom fate and circumstance are too strong; who drifts here and drifts there, clutching at this chance

and at that, barely able to keep afloat and likely at any moment to be overwhelmed and submerged and lost.

A few men are born masters. The multitude of necessity are hewers of wood and drawers of water, or else victims of the mischance that awaits the over-confidence of the feeble.

Dolly Harley's interest in the appurtenances of agriculture was at no time large, and at this moment it was almost wholly engaged with the charm of her companion, but she could not fail to contrast the cleanliness and order of this centre of the great farm with the slovenliness and disorder that were usual in the plantation buildings of her own country. The floor of the stable-yard was made of cement, and it had not upon it a wisp of straw or a particle of litter of any kind. The barn, the stables, the implement sheds, the carriage and wagon houses, were fresh and bright and clean with paint, and within they were as cleanly as they were without. The coats of the horses shone, and the vehicles, even the farm wagons, looked almost as if they had never been used. The cows in the enclosure beyond the barn were all of the best breeds, and every cow among them seemed to have been brushed and groomed for exhibition.

"It is really surprising," exclaimed Dolly, as she and George turned back into the stable-yard. "I never imagined that such places could be made to look so well or that they could be managed at all without dozens of servants. On father's plantation we have twenty blacks around the stables and barns, and yet our buildings are really shameful when compared with yours. Your cows are lovely, but I am sure you cannot have better horses than we have."

"I don't know," said George. "Our horses

are not in any way remarkable, but they are all fairly good. I have but three or four for riding and driving. Thee knows we Northern folk do not ride so much as the Southern people. I do not know precisely why."

"I love to ride!" exclaimed Dolly. "Show me one of your riding horses."

George summoned a stableman.

"Bring out Major, if thee pleases, John," he said.

A few moments later the man led a very handsome young bay horse from the stable.

"It is a beauty!" exclaimed Dolly, who had no small acquaintance with horse qualities. "I wish I might ride him."

"Thee shall," said George; "but thee must be careful. Thee is a good rider?" he asked. "However, I know that all the women of the South ride well. John," he said to the man, "put the side-saddle on Major."

"You have a side-saddle, then?" asked Dolly, smiling. "I thought this was wholly a bachelor establishment."

"It belonged to my mother," answered George. "It is very old, but in good order, and I am sure thee will find it both comfortable and safe. How far will thee ride? Thee must not go very far, for we shall have to return soon to the picnic and thy uncle and aunt."

"Only down the road to the gate yonder and back again," said Dolly. "But I do wish I could have a good long ride some day through this lovely country."

"Thee shall," said George, "if I can arrange it."

"Does Abby ride?" she asked, looking at him closely.

"No," answered George, without seeming to

notice her look. "She has never learned, and her mother is timid about it at any rate. But thee can go with me, perhaps, if I can find opportunity!"

"It will be delightful!"

When Major was led out, Dolly said to George: "Give me your hand for a help in mounting, won't you?" and George extending his broad hand, she placed her dainty foot upon his palm, and with a bound he lifted her into the saddle. The horse was spirited and at once he galloped down the road, Dolly keeping her seat firmly and waving her hand at George.

George dismissed his man; then he looked after the graceful figure of the woman with her skirts flying in the wind as she bent to the movements of the horse of which she was perfectly the mistress. "It is a perilous business," he whispered to himself in answer to the thought that ran through his mind; "but I did not seek it, I am not responsible for it and I will not be dismayed."

The girl reached the great gate that opened out upon the highway; she wheeled the horse at a gallop, turned him upon the sod of the wide lawn that dipped downward from the place where George stood, then came at full speed back again to the metalled road, dashed directly up to George, and stopped so suddenly that the panting horse was almost upon him. It was dexterous horsemanship and George admired it. The girl had spirit and courage. The Quaker would have been less than half a man not to find these qualities attractive in a beautiful woman.

"Now you must lift me down," said Dolly, tossing to him the reins that he put over his arm.

George came near to her. She leaned over and put her hands on his shoulders. Then she leaped, and he caught her full in his arms while her hands

for an instant held him fast. He felt her warm breath upon his face. He was angry with himself that he was not more displeased. She seemed not to notice that he turned his head away when she reached the ground. His brown face was reddened, while he pretended to fix the bridle. Then while he led the horse to the stable-yard gate, she walked beside him praising the horse and speaking with delight of her short ride.

"No woman in this country rides so well as thee," said George.

"You will trust me again with your horse some day, then, will you not, when you ride with me?" she said.

When the man had taken the horse, George said to her:

"Shall we return now to the picnic, or will thee look further at my place? Thee is my guest and I must do thy pleasure. My house——"

"Oh, I should dearly love to see your house," said Dolly eagerly. "May I? Are you sure you would like it?"

"If thee wishes to look at it thee is very welcome," said George, striding off toward the house, half glad and yet half sorry that the visit was to be prolonged.

They entered the door at the back of the great double stone house, and as they strolled through the wide hall George opened the doors that his companion might peep into the rooms. Upon the wall by the staircase and close by the tall clock hung an engraving of George Fox, with that spiritual face of his and the eyes with the strange look in which some think they find fanaticism, while others are sure they perceive a vision of celestial things. Opposite, upon the wall, was a picture of William Penn, not in armour, but with the dress of an English

gentleman of his time and the rounded smiling face that told of serenity and bland self-contentment.

George did not urge Dolly to enter the rooms. For her a glance was enough. She saw that they were plainly furnished, but that the tokens of wealth and refined taste and comfort were there. It seemed a large house for one man to live in, and Dolly's thought went out to the Quaker girl across the river who might come here some day to be the mistress of a lovely home.

The air within the house was cooler than that upon the outside, but when George swung open the front door the porch seemed to Dolly more tempting. For from the wide porch, supported by pillars all entwined by creeping plants, one could look across the sharp descent of the lawn, over a field or two and a clump of trees upon the lower levels directly upon the river, only three hundred yards away, and there the shining surface of the stream could be followed along the windings of the valley until it vanished far down towards the city.

Dolly and George took seats in the shady corner of the porch where the south wind blew, and while she looked at the green of the hills and the silver of the water, he pointed out to her the places of interest in the valley. When he showed her the cluster of trees that marked the springs at Spring Mill, the visit to the gipsy camp came to Dolly's remembrance, and she told him of it.

"And the woman would not tell me my fortune!" she said with mock indignation.

"I would not mourn for that, if I were thee," said George.

"You don't believe in palmistry, then, do you?"

"I should think thee was joking if thee said thee believed in it."

"I don't know," responded the girl. "There

are some queer things about the hands, and queer differences in hands, too."

"Couldn't we say the same of ears and noses and mouths, and even elbows? A look at a man's face will tell much more than a look at his hand; muc more to me, at any rate."

"Perhaps because you have never learned palmistry."

"Has thee learned it?"

"No; but still I know what some of the lines and criss-crosses mean, and—shall I try to tell your future from your hand?"

"If thee chooses," answered George, placing his broad, brown right hand, palm upward, upon the low table that stood between him and his companion.

Dolly drew her chair nearer and leaned over the table, looking closely at the hand. With her own ungloved fingers she spread out the great fingers and held down the tips of them that the palm might have strong relief. With the index finger of her other hand she indicated some of the lines of George's palm, touching them now and then while she seemed to study them intently.

"You are rich and fortunate," she said, without lifting her eyes. "There is much more good fortune in store for you, but I see here the shadow of a great disappointment. You are crossed in love; you will never have your heart's desire."

She looked up at him and smiled.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "excepting that now you must read my hand."

She thrust out her arm, bare to the elbow, rounded, white and beautiful, and put her upturned hand where his had been.

He placed his elbows upon the table and his

clasped hands rested upon his temples while he looked at the soft, moist, white palm that lay there before him. Dolly pretended not to watch him. Her face was half turned away. A drop of sweat formed upon his forehead and rolled down his cheek. He brushed it away with his left hand. The veins stood out upon his temples.

"Well?" asked the girl. "What do you see there?"

He made no answer. He withdrew his arms from the table; he put forward his right hand and touched her fingers; then, a moment hesitating, he lifted her hand and bending over it he kissed it.

She did not snatch her hand away. She withdrew it slowly and gently, and then she looked off across the lawn to the river.

"You are as indefinite as the gipsy woman was," she said. "Could you read Abby's fortune any better?"

"Let me see thy hand again," he said.

A moment passed before she responded. "Perhaps he is actually going to propose to me," she said to herself. Then she put her hand again upon the table, and still averted her eyes.

He did not take it. He put his own big hand over it and held it there, and then looking at her until she turned her eyes to his, he said:

"I could read thy soul more easily than thy palm."

The sudden solemnity of his manner impressed her. "He is going to preach to me, perhaps," she said to herself. She felt defiant.

"It is a singular gift," she answered.

"Thy face is so fair that thee seems to belong with the angels, but——"

"Men always tell women they are angels. The compliment is somewhat worn. However, you were

going to qualify it. I am like an angel, 'but'——"

"I have never had the habit to pay idle compliments," said George. "I will make no qualification. I will not judge thee. I will not even claim that I can understand thee; but this I will do: I will long for thee that thy thought may be as lovely as thy countenance."

"Now that *is* a compliment—a handsome compliment! But you are hurting my hand. Let it go, please."

He lifted his hand, and she withdrew hers from the table. He arose and stood by the porch-railing facing her. She was angry, but she was curious to hear what he would say. He was a handsome, splendid fellow, even if he would insist upon preferring preaching to flirtation.

"I am sorry that I hurt thee," he said. "Thee will forgive me, will thee not? I would suffer much to help thee, rather than to hurt thee!"

"Help my thoughts? Why bother yourself about my thoughts, whether they be lovely or unlovely? At least they are my own."

"Thine own indeed, but they influence other people; thee does not live to thyself, nor I to myself. What I think, that I am; and what I am, affects my fellow-men for good or evil. When I choose my thoughts I pick my company."

"How is that?"

"Where does thee think hell is?"

"Down below there, somewhere; that is, if there is a hell. What is your interest in it just at this moment? The fire is hot, I suppose, and they are poking one another with hot pitchforks and other unpleasant implements. The subject is not an alluring one for contemplation."

"Hell is in the soul. When I have wicked thoughts I am in hell."

"Are you there often?" she asked, but he did not heed her.

"All the evil in this world is evil thought. All the evil in the other world is evil thought. It is one thing in both worlds. When I think evil I have devils for my comrades. When my thought is holy the kingdom of heaven is within me. I can have either; the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of hell. My best wish for thee is that thee shall be angelic in thy inmost soul where thee touches the spirit world. God forgive me that I kissed thy hand a while ago. God help thee, and help me also, lest when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway. The fear of that is always with me. It was my duty not to be flippant with thee, or to have dalliance with thee, but to hear the voice of the Master saying, 'She is mine. I gave myself for her.' That is it! I must reverence thee and look at thee from afar, because thee is His trophy. Thee is bought with a price."

Dolly sat with her head bowed and her eyes upon the floor while George spoke, and grew more and more fervid until he ended. She tapped her foot impatiently as she listened, and in her heart cared for nothing that he said. Her preference was for dalliance.

"And now, please, let us return to the picnic," she said rising. "The experience has been delightful, but we must not be too self-indulgent."

They stepped from the porch to the lawn, and turned toward the wood beyond the farm buildings and the mown field. Both were silent for a time. Then she laughed and said:

"Thank you for showing me your lovely place. It was so kind of you; and then you are a much better preacher, I think, than Uncle Ponder."

He did not respond to her. He walked slowly by her side with a long stride, his hands clasped behind him, and with mingled shame and fear in his soul for himself and for her. They came into the broad road that wound about the hill through the woods on the side towards the river, and when they had come around to the northern slope, they passed a sharp turn of the road, and there they saw two familiar figures.

When Clayton left the picnic ground with Abby, they strolled through the wood to the place where a great rock overhanging the pathway and upheld by the stony earth on either side made a kind of cave, which the people of the country-side named the Indian Cave. A rustic seat had been made there, and Abby and Clayton tarried to look at the cave, which was blackened by the smoke of fires kindled by sojourners in the forest. Then they turned and sat to face the view to the north. The brown, dead leaves, gathered for a century, made a cushion for their feet, and over them and around them the foliage of the great trees shaded them and framed the picture of the valley below them. A thread of a stream dashed vehemently down the narrow gorge a dozen feet from them, and plunged into the river far down the hillside. Over and beyond the river, softened by the faint haze that filled the air, lay Connock, and behind it the sweet Plymouth valley with tilled fields and low farmhouses and clumps of woodland and here and there the white gash of a quarry. There was no sound but of the rushing water of the brook and of the fluttering leaves, excepting when, from the riverside, came the roar of a swift flying train or the shrill scream of a steam whistle.

They sat in silence for awhile, and upon Abby's

spirit came a feeling of solemnity that was almost oppressive. She felt that serious things were to be said to-day, and that she should not go home with her love still voiceless.

"It is more beautiful than my own country," at last said Clayton, making with his right hand a quick gesture toward the distant scene, "although I think that very beautiful. But perhaps it is not just the loveliness of the landscape that makes it so charming for me. The mind gives its own colouring to the picture always, does it not?"

"I think so," answered Abby.

"Beautiful as it is, however," said Clayton with mournfulness, "I shall see it no more," and he thrust out his hand again as if to wave farewell to the valley, the river and the trees.

A little shiver ran through Abby's frame, and she clenched her hands close as she held them in her lap.

"Is thee going away? Must thee go home again?" she asked in a low voice.

"To-day," he answered, still looking at the far scene, as if he dared not turn his eyes to her. "I must go to-day."

"I am sorry," she said quietly.

He seemed not to hear her, and then he said:

"I have no summons to go. There is no business to call me. My father has not said he needed me. Perhaps I may not go to my home. Perhaps——"

"Thee will not become a soldier, will thee? Oh, do not do that!" Abby's cheeks were white and her eyes were moist with the coming tears.

"I do not know," said Clayton, still not turning his face to hers. "I am in a strange tangle of perplexity. The South seems sometimes to call to me to come to help in her cause; but—but there is something else—there is something mightier than

the home tie or the love of country; something that——. Do you know why these woods and waters and all these rolling hills and green valleys are lovely to me? Do you know?" he asked almost fiercely; and then, turning his face full to hers and dropping his voice to tones of tenderness, he answered his own question. "It is because you are here."

Abby did not speak. She clenched her hands tighter, and the flush rose upon her cheek and spread to her forehead.

"Yes," said Clayton, passion beginning to colour his voice. "I came to Connock reluctantly, because I ought; because my mother wished me to be considerate of my aunt. I thought to be wearied of it in a day or two and to go back, leaving my sister here. But when I saw you sitting on the porch with your mother, I knew that I should stay. I knew that the crisis of my life had come. You will not believe that I passed a sleepless night that first night of my arrival here. You will not believe that I have been in half delirium since that time. Exaltation sometimes, so that it seemed as if I could not bear such joy; and then despair that would fill all my soul with pain."

He saw that the tears were trickling down Abby's cheeks as he spoke.

"For while it was plain to me that there could be no peace for me again, no peace unless you were mine, I said to myself, How shall such an one as I, with his life all stained and sinful, dare to ask that girl to join her pure and holy life to his? You seemed beyond me, far, far beyond me, and you seem so now; and yet you have been very gracious to me and have not disdained me and have put your hand sometimes in mine. So I could not help loving you; and then the hope would come that perhaps despite my unworthiness—despite—

despite—(I cannot say it)—you might stoop to return that love."

Abby arose and walked to the brink of the little stream and put her hands over her face. Clayton, surprised at the movement, sat still for a moment, and then, rising, he went toward her.

"It is over, then?" he said, standing close behind her. "I should not have spoken. I knew that I ought not to speak. But I am going away. I shall be gone at once. But oh, that I may see your face once more and hear you say that you forgive me!"

She turned, and a swift glance showed him that he had misjudged her. He flung his arms passionately about her, and with her arms clasping his neck, she hid her face upon his breast half crying. He lifted her head gently and kissed her fondly, and with misty eyes she looked into his eyes.

"You love me, my dearest, you do love me, then?"

"Yes!" she whispered, and once more he held her to him and kissed her again and again. He led her to the rustic bench.

"Thee will not go now?" she asked with a tremulous voice.

"No," he said, "I will not go to-day. I cannot bear to leave you, my darling, my love, my Abby! I must have time to think, time to tell you things you must know."

"What things?" asked Abby. There was in his voice and manner that which gave her foreboding of evil, even in this very ecstasy of her joy.

"Not now," he said, waving his hand as though to dispel a vision that was hateful. "Not now, when this splendour of happiness, this miracle of peace has come to us. Let me look into your eyes and see there your love for me! Let me hold

you fast and kiss you, my sweet, my dear love. God gave you to me from the very beginning. You were always mine, my precious wife."

"I thank Him for it. It is His gift to us both."

"Did you love me from the first, dear Abby?"

"Oh, yes!" she said, dropping her eyes.

"When you first saw me?" demanded this lover with eager curiosity.

"Yes, and before, when Mrs. Ponder told me thee was coming; then—I do not know why, I did not understand—but I felt sure thee was coming to claim me—sure of it."

"It was from eternity! It will be for ever!" said Clayton with solemn fervour.

"For ever!" repeated Abby. "I will never change."

"Not if sorrow come and separation? Not if bitter fortune says disown him? Not if I go away to the Southland and to the wild chance of war?"

"Not that, dear Clayton! Oh, not that! I cannot bear that you should fight. We are peace people. But to fight against my country! I pray, pray that you will not do that."

"I feel sometimes like a coward that I stay at home when all my people are in arms, but it is my strong love for you that holds me. I may not go if you will weep for me, but, oh, my love! there may be other things to thrust us apart and give us heart-ache. Though your father and your mother should frown upon us, and your Friends in the meeting should disapprove, you will love me still, will you not?"

"I cannot help it," answered Abby, with a shadow of dread in her heart. "I have lost the power to control my feelings. Father and mother will be most sorrowful and Friends will cast me out, but if I must die for thee I will."

Again he kissed her passionately.

"I asked too much of you when I asked you to be mine," he said. "I am not worthy any sacrifice, and yet I summon you to it. I summon myself to it. I am ready for it. I cannot help loving you until love seems to me the whole of life, but rather than you should suffer I will give it all up. I will go away and never see your face again. Shall I go?"

She put her hand in his and looked gravely in his face.

"No; anything but that—anything. I cannot give thee up."

"I have asked myself a thousand times," he said, "the source of this strange and wonderful passion that impelled you to me and me to you. We did not create it; we are not responsible for it; we dare not defy it. The impulse is Divine. The Creator of all things created us for each other; and no human authority can put us asunder."

"Let us wait patiently," she said with a tranquil voice. "The same Spirit that led you to me and gave you to me will show us the right way if we trust ourselves wholly to Him."

Clayton looked troubled, and he made as if he would speak to her; but he held his peace, and at last he said:

"If we are helped in that way, it will be your fellowship with Him that helps us. I dare not ask for a blessing for myself."

"He will hear us both and bless us both," said Abby, loyal in her love for Clayton and without a doubt of him. "And now," he said, "shall we not return to the company? It is growing late."

He took her hand, and slowly they walked along the forest path, both joyful in triumphant love, but in the woman's soul joy was mingled strangely

with foreboding, whilst the heart of the man bore the burden of clear certainty that on this day he had chosen dishonour for his portion.

Presently Clayton felt Abby's hand clench upon his, and she withdrew her hand. She had heard footsteps. She turned and saw George and Dolly upon the road behind them. Dolly had seen her hand in Clayton's. George was not sure that the quiet motion he saw was the act of unclasping the hands of the two, but the thought came into his mind and with it a flash of anguish. No suspicion had ever before come to him that Clayton might supplant him. Now the full force of the possibility swept in upon his soul, and instantly he saw in it retribution for the sin into which he had, in his thought, been led by the woman who walked with him.

Together the four, when civil greetings had been exchanged, walked with outward tranquillity to the noisy picnic ground; and Dolly deep down in her heart was exultant that Clayton had won the love of the Quaker girl, and that in doing so he had stabbed at the heart of the man who had dared to repulse and reprove her.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE CHURCH

CLAYTON HARLEY was already married when he declared his love for Abby and asked her to be his wife. The marriage was hidden from the members of his family and his friends, and his wife was far away from him in another country. He bore the burden of his secret lightly while he cared no more for any woman than he cared for his wife; but it had become heavy since he began to love Abby, and all but intolerable since she had plighted her troth to him. He had come home from the picnic and from that entrancing love-passage with her to a night of misery and self-reproach. In the sleepless hours he thought of a hundred plans for extricating himself from the dishonour in which he was involved; but every one of these was shattered against the hard facts that his marriage with Abby was barred by another marriage, and that, even if he could free himself from the wife he scorned, the pure and gentle Quaker girl would be unlikely to marry a man in such a situation. Another thing was clear to him: he could not give her up. He had gone too far for that; too far for him and for her. He truly loved her, and he was not capable of such a sacrifice. He knew that she loved him truly, and he feared both the effect upon her of revelation of the truth, and that she would despise him if she did not hate him.

But out of bewilderment and conflicting emotion, out of the struggle between inclination and positive obligation, there came at last conviction that he must find courage to tell the truth to Abby, and to accept the consequences. This he resolved to do, dreadful as the task was for him and repulsive as the revelation must be for her.

Through the early morning, holding fast to a purpose that wavered often and sometimes seemed likely to lose its strength, he considered in what manner and in what secluded place he might give to the girl this terrible confidence. There must be privacy and security from interruption, and he must not take her far from home, for how should the return journey be made if she should spurn him?

He thought of his uncle's church, close at hand, and, sure of Dr. Ponder's habits, he resolved that he would induce Abby to go thither with him at an hour of the morning when no one would be likely to intrude upon them. He would make her love for music the bait to tempt her, for he had no little skill as an organist.

Abby was quick to consent to go with him, and at once they entered the church through the street door. Clayton locked the door again when he had closed it.

"I did not know you were an organ-player," said Abby as Clayton opened the instrument and, sitting upon the stool, started the motor and arranged the stops.

"I learned something of the art while I was at college," said Clayton, "but hardly enough to call myself an organist."

Abby retreated to a distant part of the church that she might listen. The day was clouded, and the painted windows permitted but a half-light to fill the room. Before Clayton touched the instru-

ment there was perfect silence. A faint odour of the flowers that stood upon the table in the chancel lingered in the air. The girl was not used to the sentiment that finds sacredness in buildings, but she felt it now and felt it strongly. The crimson tints of the huge windows, the warm colour upon the walls, the deep yellow tints of the roof timbers, the glittering brasses of the pulpit and the lectern, the draperies and ornaments of the communion table, the solemn hush that seemed to fill the building—all these things impressed a mind that was ever sensitive to such influences And when Clayton, beginning with the soft sweet stops, filled the holy place with rich harmonies, Abby scarcely could restrain her tears.

The player became bolder, and the tenderness of the music gave way to the grandeur and exultation of the diapasons. To Abby the tones of the organ,

"Moaning like a god in pain,"

were made more rapturous by her passion for the player. She thought him beautiful as he sat there swaying his body slightly and moving his head while he handled the instrument.

When Clayton ended the playing he closed the lid of the console and, wheeling about, descended from the stool, resolved that now he would venture upon the dreadful task to which duty called him. The girl would have had him remain longer at the organ, but he would not, and he moved towards her, trying to hide behind an appearance of levity the tremulousness that was in his soul. He turned for a moment into the pulpit, and addressing Abby he said:

"Here Uncle Ponder pours out his soporifics upon

the congregation. I wonder if I could put you to sleep if I should talk to you from here?"

Abby laughed lightly, but she had been too deeply moved by the music to respond in feeling to this foolishness. Clayton came into the aisle, and as he walked slowly along he looked at the great window with the saints and the angels shining in the light, and he said:

"It is a queer notion, isn't it, to put plates around their heads? Fancy your own portrait, Abby, with a white disk for a background!"

He came and sat in the pew with the girl in the gloomy corner almost behind one of the great pillars that upheld the yellow timbers. She was glad to have him there. He took her hand in his. She felt entirely happy, and she had no impulse to speak. The sacredness of the place seemed to give a kind of consecration to her affection. She began to perceive in what manner the colours, the atmosphere, the trappings of the sanctuary warm the emotions of worshippers. It would have given her contentment to sit there for hours, in silence, holding the hand of her lover. Her home, and all Connock, seemed far away as if she were in a strange distant country, filled with the glory of a new and higher and holier life.

Clayton would have broken the silence if he could have summoned courage to speak. He knew he must do it, but horror and dismay filled him as he thought how his avowal would plunge this lovely and loving girl from the exaltation of happiness to an abyss of sorrow and shame. More than once in his mind he had framed a sentence which would serve to prepare her for the revelation, but before his lips could utter it he quailed before the terror of the ordeal, and withheld his words. At last he said:

"Abby!" and then he could go no further.

She looked at him in answer, and she saw that his face was pale. His hand grew cold in hers.

"Is thee ill, dear?" she asked with some disquiet.

Clayton laughed nervously, and said:

"Oh, no! Why should you think so?" Then he tried to divert his own thought and hers. He withdrew his hand, and pointing to the window he said, in jesting tones:

"The painters who put the wings on those angels couldn't have known or cared much for anatomy, could they? Human shoulder-blades and heavenly wings are not near relations."

"Isn't there Scripture authority for it?" she asked. "Of course thee knows that the wings are merely figurative. Don't they represent swift, unimpeded movement, the flight of the spirit as through air; and also instant obedience?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"I think the idea beautiful," she said.

"You believe in angels?" he asked.

"Surely; and thee does, too?"

"I believe in human angels, anyhow; and I would rather they had no wings."

"There are good angels," said Abby, "and bad angels. Isn't that an awful thing to think of? Evil in a spiritual form; infinite power for harm; inextinguishable life that is all hate, as contrasted with life that is all love?"

"Awful," responded Clayton. "Do you remember Victor Hugo's poem *The Djinns?* In the rhythm of the verse you can almost hear the flapping of the bat wings."

"Are there men who are all evil," asked Abby, with a half shudder, "and who carry their wickedness with them into the spirit world?"

"Perhaps," said Clayton; "but I am sure most men who sin do it largely through force of circumstances. Folly, ignorance, hot passion, sudden, overwhelming temptation are accountable for more sin than cold, malignant purpose."

"I hope so," said Abby. She was thinking how far she was from the reach of such influences, and how safe she was in the shelter of her father's home and of the love of a good man, when Clayton desperately seized this chance to tell to her the truth about himself.

"Abby," he said, in a voice that was not quite his own and that seemed to him to come from a throat all the muscles of which were tense, "I wish to tell you a story."

"Very well," she said, but the strangeness of his voice and his manner gave her a feeling of dread.

"I knew a boy once who when he had quitted college went upon an errand to Mexico. Some of his people had property there, mines and other things, and he was sent thither partly that he might look into the business and report upon it, but chiefly, I suppose, that he might see a bit of the world and learn to take care of himself. He was gone for a year, and so little did he learn about taking care of himself that he became the victim of a sharp woman and a mercenary father, and like a fool married the woman."

"Why do you tell me this?" asked Abby, into whose mind a faint gleam of fear had come.

Clayton did not heed her inquiry.

"This stupid boy persuaded himself that he was in love, and the woman and the father so entangled him that, when he found he had deluded himself, he could not retreat. He married her, and then, his eyes wide opened by the ghastly consequences of his folly, he left her, and left her forever.

This boy afterwards met a lovely girl to whom he was drawn by the force of a passion high and holy, and it became his duty to tell her the truth."

Abby was weeping and her face was white.

"I am that boy," continued Clayton. "I have sinned against you, and I brought you here that I might make confession to you and ask your forgiveness."

Abby made no answer. In a moment all her joy had shrivelled up and vanished, and she found herself enveloped in misery which almost paralyzed her faculties.

Clayton leaned towards her and waited for her to speak; but she looked out through her tears into what seemed thick darkness beyond her and still held her peace.

He reached for her hand and took it in his. She yielded to him for a moment, and then gently withdrew her hand.

"Can you say nothing to me, Abby?" he asked.

She tried to turn her head to look at him, but the movement ended instantly, and she folded her hands upon her lap and stayed silent.

Clayton refrained from urging her further. He sat still beside her, loathing himself as he believed she loathed him, and filled with fear that the shock of this revelation might bring grave harm to her. While he waited his mind recurred to the scene at the Indian Cave and to the rapture with which he had found her yielding to his caresses. For him that seemed now clear infamy.

"Let us go," she said, rising, when many minutes had elapsed without utterance from either of them. He arose with her, and with deference of manner, as if he should hardly dare to speak to her, he said:

"And is all over between us?"

"I do not know," she answered wearily, looking

away from him. "I am but an ignorant girl, not used to the world's ways. What shall I do? Have pity upon my weakness. I know not which way to turn."

"I have sinned deeply against you," he said.

She seemed as if she did not hear him.

"How shall I love another woman's husband and not sin against God?"

"But I will be free," he dared to say.

"Divorced! My people will scorn me if I marry one whose lawful wife is living. No; not that! not that!"

"There is no hope, then?" he said. "The door is closed forever?"

"It is all darkness to me," she murmured. "It is the bitterness of death."

He could say nothing. Then turning to him she said: "Shall you not go back to her and be faithful to her? Then I can take up my heavy burden and bear it, and you can bear yours as you ought to do. This is what people have meant when they spoke of enduring pain and sorrow. It is hard, but it is better than disgrace."

"I cannot give you up," he said passionately, and seized her hand and kissed it. She looked down at him as she caught her hand away, and said sadly: "That was very sweet to me yesterday; but now! You put shame upon me Clayton."

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me!" he said. "Surely you cannot believe that I would do that! I love you so truly that I would willingly give my life to save you from one pang of sorrow. You know that, do you not? I have not sinned against you willingly or deliberately. I could no more help loving you when I saw you than I could stop the beating of my heart. I am not wicked. I am entangled in misfortune."

"I can believe it," she answered, "but still we must go apart. I will bid thee farewell."

"Not yet!" he said eagerly. "Hear me but for a moment longer. If you leave me now you will never understand me; you will never cease to censure me. I am willing to go away if you wish it as soon as we leave this church, but oh! do not thrust me aside until I have a chance to remove some of the reproach that rests upon me."

She hesitated for a moment, and then sat down to hear him, but she would not look at him.

"I pray that you will understand," he said, "that I never for a single moment loved any woman but you. I am actually not responsible for the marriage I told you of. That I was not much more than a child when it occurred is not excuse enough. I was ensnared, cajoled and intimidated. The woman is coarse, illiterate and much older than I am. She never really attracted me for a moment; but in an instant of blind and reckless folly I was made to seem to ask her to marry me. I was surrounded by men of violence, in a lawless mining settlement, and partly to save my life, partly from a false sense of honour, to make good what in my childish ignorance seemed to me my word, I consented to have a ceremony performed. The next day I fled, and I have never seen the woman since. She may be dead for aught I know."

Abby looked at his handsome face, pale with the violence of his emotion, and she felt her resolution becoming weaker.

"I have no right," he continued, "to involve you in the consequences of my weakness and my misfortune. But you have loved me, and I know you can pity me and withhold your scorn. I should have fled away as soon as I saw you. The first word I spoke to you was fatal to me. I forgot

everything but the longing of my soul for you. Even now I would rather part with my life than give you up; life will have nothing for me when I am forced to do that. But I will do it if you wish. Yes, I will do it."

"What else is there to do?" asked Abby with a tremulous voice.

"Nothing else, if that woman lives; I know it. But can we not, when we part, have some communication with one another, so that if she shall die——?"

"To wish for the death of another person is murder!" said Abby.

"Not to wish for it," he said piteously, "but to wait for it. It may have come already. I will make inquiry. I will at once try to discover the truth. May I not remain in touch with you until then?"

Abby did not answer. She found it not easy to reconcile her strong inclination with her conviction of duty. Then in a kind of desperation Clayton said:

"Shall I talk to Uncle Ponder about it? Perhaps he may be able to perceive what is just the right thing to do?"

"No," said Abby, after a moment's pause, "Dr. Ponder can give no help. It is perfectly clear to me that I must see thee no more. No one can advise anything else and be right."

Clayton buried his face in his hands and bent his head to the back of the pew before him. Abby restrained her impulse to rise and leave the church. There was a movement in her soul of deep pity for this unhappy man.

Then Clayton lifted his head, and standing up with his face pallid and his eyes filled with tears, said:

"I will go, then! This accursed life of mine shall afflict you no longer. It was abominable cruelty for me to bring the horror of it into your pure and sweet existence. I should have controlled myself better. But my punishment is heavier than my sin deserves. Here, in this sacred place," he said passionately, lifting his right arm and looking upward, "I protest against it! I call God to witness that I am a victim of wrong, and no deliberate offender. It is unjust that I should have such ferocious suffering inflicted upon me for such an offence. Is God just? Where is His justice? Where is the justice that would tear my heart from my breast because of a sin that was almost no sin?"

"Curse God and die!" The words flashed through Clayton's mind, and he felt as if he should like to accept their blasphemous counsel; but he refrained and sank into his seat. Then, leaping to his feet, he said:

"Come, we will go now," and he led the way down the aisle. At the door he took the key from his pocket and put it in the lock. Then he turned to Abby and said:

"It is the last time I shall see your face. It is for ever! Oh, my dear! Oh, my love! my heart is broken!"

Abby put her hands tightly over her face, and tottered as if she would fall. Clayton sprang to her. He thought he would simply keep her from falling. When he touched her, she dropped her hands, and in an instant his arms were about her; she held him fast, and her face was hidden against his breast. She clung to him, all her good resolutions gone, all her convictions and purposes flung away and forgotten, and while he kissed her over and over again she spoke no more of shame or of

parting, but said to him while he caressed her and pressed her close to his heart:

"I cannot give thee up! I cannot!"

But moments of ecstasy are fleeting, and when Clayton turned again to the church door and unlocked it, Abby felt that she could not, as she was, go out to face the unsentimental life of Connock and the people in her home.

"Go first," she said to Clayton, "and I will stay for awhile in the church to compose myself."

Then when he had gone she turned the key, and entering a pew, her face crimson and her hair disordered, she fell upon the cushioned seat with her heart beating fast and her brain excited almost to madness. Hardly conscious of what she was doing, but with fear that some one should discover her, she put her hair in order. Then she tried to steady her mind that she might consider her situation. She found that she could not easily do this. She had an impulse to pray; but then suddenly the thought swept in upon her and overwhelmed her: "To love the husband of another woman is to commit crime. I am a criminal"; and then the flush upon her face deepened, and she thought with horror of the hot kisses that still lingered upon her cheek, kisses that belonged to the lawful wife who had been deserted. What would her mother think if she could know what had happened? She felt that she could hardly find courage to look into her mother's eyes again. What would George Fotherly think? For a moment George in his saintliness seemed lifted up far above the faithless husband who had just left her. Then her passion for Clayton again poured in upon her soul, and she almost hated George for appearing to be a better man than Clayton was. Clayton was the prey of evil-doers, not at all himself an evil-doer, and

George was better because he had not been tempted; or because no subtle wicked woman ever laid a trap for him.

Her mind reverted then to the worship she had with George in the garden but a few weeks ago. It seemed ages ago. She had grown old since then. She seemed to have been living amid storm and tempest all the intervening time, and while the peace and the quiet of that old life looked lovely to her as she glanced back upon it, she said to herself that in truth it was empty and worthless because she did not love Clayton then. She would rather have tumult and suffering with the love than to possess peace without it. Looking forward, she saw that this passion was so fierce and so imperious that she might find herself driven by it far from everything she had been used to reverence, and she shuddered and clenched her hands upon her lap as this vision of evil rose before her mind.

She remembered how she prayed that day in the garden with George, and now she had wandered so far away from the right that she dared not pray. That seemed horrible, too. What was to be the destiny of a girl who could not ask God to help her and to bless her and save her?

Those angels there in the window were happy and smiling. She gazed at them until they appeared to be almost real personages. They smiled because their hearts were pure, and all heaven is pure; but heaven is not for the woman whose face has been stained by the kisses of another woman's husband. It would be well for her, she thought, if she had been called there weeks ago. "But then I should not have known Clayton," she said; and when she looked at her heart she saw that she had no desire for heaven without him.

It was such a heavy burden, all this sorrow and

distraction, for the poor little soul that had never before borne a burden of any kind. Disappointed love, she felt, would have been hard enough to bear, but love requited and then in all its fruitions made impossible was too terrible; and yet even this load of misery must be made heavier by the fact that the love was tainted by crime. She tried again to look down the years to come, and she could see nothing but long, dreadful waiting for an event that it were murderous to hope for, and which might be postponed until she herself was gone.

Abby sat long in the church, how long she did not know; and while her pulse grew quieter and the flush passed from her face, her mind lost none of its disquiet. She had just resolved to leave the building and to go home, when she was startled to hear voices in the vestry room near to the chancel. She rose to creep down the aisle to the door, but fear came upon her that she would be seen, so she hid herself behind the pillar, and at that moment Mrs. Ponder came into the church with Dolly.

Mrs. Ponder always prepared for Sunday by finding the lessons in the Bible for her husband, fixing the numbers of the hymns on the bulletin board, and arranging in an orderly manner all the things upon the communion table and in the chancel.

"Dolly," she said, "look in the index of the hymnal and find the number of the hymn 'I was a wandering sheep,' that's a good girl! I never could find anything alphabetically. I can't remember if 'I' comes before 'M' or after 'P.' Then please get the step ladder and fix the numbers of all the hymns for me."

While Dolly turned the leaves of the hymnal, Mrs. Ponder said:

"It was really very odd for Clayton to leave

us so suddenly. Do you think, dear—?" Mrs. Ponder hesitated to express her own thought.

"He seemed a good deal agitated, and he gave me a note for Abby," answered Dolly.

"Something was the matter," said Mrs. Ponder. "Abby could hardly have refused him, do you imagine?"

"It doesn't seem quite possible. He has known her but a few days; but Southern men are ardent lovers, and I saw he was dead in love with her. I thought she fancied him."

"These tranquil Quaker people are skilful at hiding their real feelings," said Mrs. Ponder.

"Yes," answered Dolly, "and demure girls like Abby are very deceiving. You can't tell what fire they have down inside of them."

"She is just a darling girl," said Mrs. Ponder, "whether she loves him or not."

"Perfectly lovely!" answered Dolly.

"Nothing would please uncle or me more than for Clayton to marry her. It would bring her right into the church. I was so afraid she would marry George Fotherly and stay with the Quakers."

Dolly laughed. "The idea, auntie, of Clayton bringing anybody into the church! He wouldn't have the least influence over her in that direction. It wouldn't surprise me if he should go off and enlist in the Confederate army."

Mrs. Ponder was turning the leaves of the great Bible on the reading desk to find a lesson in Second Samuel. Her mind for a moment was diverted from the subject of her conversation with Dolly.

"Dolly?" she said.

"What, aunt?"

"Do you suppose the Hebrews in the old time used affectionate abbreviations of names just as we do?"

"To what do you refer?"

"It seems strange, doesn't it, dear, to think of David's elder brothers calling him 'Dave,' and of old Eli calling Samuel 'Sammy,' but quite likely they did so."

"I believe Mr. Fotherly would be awfully cut up if Abby should fancy Clayton," said Dolly, with stronger interest in the men of the present than in those of the past. "I know he loves her."

"I have thought he might be a good match for you," said Mrs. Ponder, withdrawing to the inner chancel to arrange the table.

Dolly laughed. "I will never marry a preacher. He is too cold for me, anyhow."

"I don't know," responded Mrs. Ponder. "There are some advantages in having a preacher for a husband. You can quote his sermons at him and compel him to live up to them. But George is a farmer more than a preacher, and he is not poor, like most of the members of the apostolic ministry. Nobody will ever steal our diamonds or rob our bank; but these things are not to be despised, Dolly. George Fotherly is rich."

"I shouldn't fancy a saint for a husband; not even a rich saint."

"Dolly! It is shocking to hear you speak in that manner! But I fear you could never influence George towards the church even if you should marry him. You have too much levity and he is too much set in his opinions. But Abby! I am perfectly sure that if your uncle could once fairly get at her mind he would bring her over. He is irresistible with sane and reasonable Quakers. He converted seven in his first parish."

Mrs. Ponder and Dolly withdrew to the vestry room for a moment for some purpose, and Abby, darting from behind the pillar, her cheeks aflame

again, and with a sense of shame upon her as if she had been an eavesdropper, hurried down the aisle, through the vestibule and out through the great door, which she left open.

She went home and hid herself in her room; and with her was one thought: Clayton had gone! She felt half glad and half sorry. It was brave and right for him to go away, and yet she had a rebellious feeling that he was deserting her in the bitterest hour of her trouble. She was eager to receive the note he had written her, and when it came she locked the door of her room while she read it. It was as follows:—

"My dear Abby,—It is better that I leave you for the present. I cannot help loving you dearly wherever I am, and I do not fear you will cease to love me until I shall be free and shall have a right to claim you for my own. We will wait; if not with patience, then with hopefulness. Every moment I shall have you in my mind, and sometimes I will write to you, if I may. Will you give me permission to do so?"

Abby kissed the letter and thrust it into the bosom of her dress. She said to herself that she would consider the request that he might write to her, but away down in her inner self she knew that she would permit him to write and would find happiness in reading his letters.

CHAPTER VIII

GEORGE FOTHERLY TRIES HIS FATE

ABBY was not used to concealment, and the dejection which came to her as a result of Clayton's revelation was so sharply contrasted with her usual blithe and pleasant manner that her mother surely would have questioned her respecting the cause of it had not there been another plainly evident reason for the girl's despondency.

The condition of Isaac Woolford's affairs became worse instead of better as the certainty appeared that the war would not be quickly ended; and Isaac talked of his troubles freely to his wife and his daughter. Thus Rachel, with her own spirits depressed by the trials of her husband, had no reason for suspecting that Abby's sorrowfulness was due to any other cause. To the girl it would have been grief enough that trouble had come to them through the entanglements of her father's business, but that she should carry the additional weight of misery that must be completely hidden was almost beyond her strength. It seemed to her horribly selfish that she should have to think of her own suffering at a time when her father needed all the sympathy his loved ones could give to him; but she felt indeed that she had hardly any control over the circumstances that had brought affliction to her heart. She had not plotted to love Clayton; nor had she known that love for him was hopeless. She had a dull feeling that some

monstrous ill fate or evil destiny was making her the victim of its malevolence.

Isaac Woolford was master of the art of smelting iron ore. At a time when that business was not usually done upon a basis of exact science, Isaac had learned enough of the inner mysteries of the art to enable him to employ precision in his operations, and precision meant economical production and good iron. But a skilled manufacturer must sell his wares, and unless he be wise in the ways of commerce he may not reach success. Isaac Woolford had little of this wisdom. He was half of a pretty large man, but to be half of a large man may not be so profitable as to be wholly a small man unless a partner can be found who has the qualities that are lacking, and Isaac had no partner.

Thus his life had been spent in the conduct of a business which sometimes made headway for a brief period and then, because of his want of foresight or of sound judgment or of accurate calculation, lost all that it had gained. More than once the promise was good that he would be made rich, but always some unforeseen event appeared to overthrow his hopes and to entangle him in deeper perplexity and more distressing embarrassment. For many years his office by the furnace had been the scene of a strong effort to keep his business running and to avert bankruptcy. He tried not to go into debt. He was truly scrupulous to avoid buying when he might not be able to pay. But circumstances sometimes were desperate. Money for wages must be had, coal must be purchased, ore and limestone must be procured, and a growing interest account must be cared for unless the furnace were to be blown out and his career as an iron-maker ended.

The banks had long felt uncomfortable about

his notes; many of his friends were chilly when borrowing was proposed; and now, when the price of iron was booming upward and all his costs for labour and material were increasing, he found himself barred from the best favour of the market by the contract which required him still to sell his iron at the low prices of the peace period. He stood by his contract manfully and without complaining, but he could not help sometimes having a feeling of bitterness when he figured that, but for it, the soaring values would have permitted him, almost for the first time in his life, to stand firmly upon his feet again, nearly free from the hideous slavery of debt.

He felt at times like a beaten man. To him who has for long years eagerly striven for success and has always just missed it, there comes at last a sense of bewilderment and fatigue. The struggle seems useless and hopeless. He loses faith in himself. He learns to fear that he has permitted his self-esteem to overestimate his powers. When his conclusions respecting business policy appear to be impregnably sound, he still distrusts them. Where, in his earlier life, he used to feel certain, he now has doubts. He is half inclined to believe that for him the safe way is to put judgment aside, and to make bold, reckless dashes at the end he wishes to reach, with the possibility that chance may help him.

He is impressed more and more by the belief that there is a mysterious element in the qualities that produce victory, an element that he cannot clearly perceive or get within his grasp. Other men who have swept past him to triumphant issues must know a secret that has been withheld from him. He is puzzled, baffled, faint-hearted, discouraged, tired. If he has ignored religion he may

find strong the temptation to dishonesty, or he may at the worst have an impulse to quit the fretful, wearisome, almost loathsome struggle by the horror of self-destruction. If he have hold of spiritual things, as Isaac Woolford had, he may find solace in the belief that Providence has kept him at a school wherein the mighty virtue of humility may best be learned; he may perceive without the aid of the spoken word that earthly things are indeed vanity; he may bow his head amid his shattered hopes, his wasted fortunes, and his daily and hourly wrestlings with invincible difficulty, and worship the Power that has made the discipline of sorrow the best preparation for admission to the celestial places.

The necessity was upon Isaac to obtain some more money. The banks would not lend to him. They would have required the best endorsement upon his paper if money conditions had been ordinary; but now, with the country entering upon a war of unknown proportions; with gold going up; with currency of all kinds scarce; with apprehension in every mind, and with half panic fear in all the marts of commerce, Isaac could hardly obtain an endorser, and the banks would have been reluctant to discount his notes no matter by whom they should be guaranteed.

Isaac had borrowed upon mortgage until all the property he owned was bonded. The grey house in which he lived belonged to his wife. He had given it to her when he married her that she might be provided for against the day of disaster; and now that disaster impended he shrank from taking it from her and tossing it into the ravenous maw that had swallowed everything else. The proof, however, was plain that the sacrifice must be made, or else he must abandon the struggle,

surrender the furnace and his business and turn to some other method of earning bread. His wife was willing he should bond the house, but her husband's incapacity had long been so evident to her that she had no doubt of the meaning of a new mortgage: when the furnace and the ore beds and the farm tracts were gone the home would go, and he and she at the beginning of old age would be nearer to outright destitution than when they began life together. She saw the whole truth and she faced it bravely; she would not give a single pang more to Isaac by seeming to desire to withhold her property from him or by shutting the only door through which he could catch a gleam of hope.

"The five thousand dollars I can get from mortgaging the house will permit me to complete the contract for pig iron that is crushing me, and leave something over. I am almost sure, Rachel, that then I can get a share of the profitable business."

"Thee is more than welcome to the house, Isaac," she said. "Thee knows about thy affairs. I must trust thee, and trust God. I will not obstruct thy plans. If we lose our home, we shall not lose our love for each other or our trust in Him. Of whom will thee borrow the money?"

Isaac did not at once answer. He was half ashamed to mention again the name of the man to whom he had so often gone for help. Then he said:

"Of George."

"He is very kind to thee."

"Yes," said Isaac. "I owe him more than money. Although, to be sure, he has ample security for all that he has lent me."

"He has not always considered that, I am sure," said Rachel.

"Perhaps not, but he must know he can lose nothing; and then, I suppose——"

"Thee supposes what, Isaac?" asked his wife, when he left the sentence incomplete, and turned his head to look through the open window of the living room.

"Well, dear, thee knows we have long expected—or, rather, we have long hoped, that—that perhaps George and Abby might——"

"He is a sluggish wooer," said Rachel.

"Because he takes for granted Abby will accept him. They have grown up together."

"I cannot tell whether she will or not," said Rachel. "She seems to care for him."

"There is no doubt about it," said Isaac, confidently; "and so, if the worst comes to the worst with us, our own son-in-law will have our property. I have had no little comfort from that reflection. I wish he would settle the matter with Abby. Has thee ever spoken to her about it?"

"No; I should very much dislike to do that."

"I think I shall do it," said Isaac, "and I will try to see George at once about the mortgage."

That evening, Rachel being within, Isaac, sitting upon the porch in the twilight with Abby, moved his chair beside hers and put his arm about her.

"Thee has always been a great comfort to me, Abigail," he said. "Thy conduct has been becoming to thy membership with Friends, and thee has done much to make the atmosphere of our home one of peace and love."

"Thank thee, dear father."

"In all my troubles thee and thy dear mother have made the home a refuge for me. Thee has blessed me by thy sweet and modest behaviour to others and by thy loving obedience to and tender sympathy for thy parents. I could wish for no

improvement in thy demeanour. Thee has fulfilled all my best hopes for thee."

There was a little pang in Abby's heart as she thought that these words could not have been spoken had her father known of the relation into which she had come with Clayton Harley; but she answered:

"Thee and mother have put a debt of love and devotion upon me that I can never repay."

"Thy happiness has always been our great concern, and will always be. When thee shall find a good husband, we shall rejoice with thee that thy cup of happiness is full."

Abby did not respond.

"Mother and I," continued Isaac, "have thought for a long time that George cared for thee, and that would give us great pleasure. He has been with thee much and has seemed to prefer thee to others, but——"

"He is just my friend," said Abby, interrupting him. She dreaded the question her father seemed to intend.

"I thought perhaps he might have said a word to thee—or in some way indicated to thee what his feeling for thee is."

"No, father, he has not."

It was upon Isaac's mind to tell her of his money obligations to George and of the proposal that he should take a mortgage upon the grey house; but upon reflection he shrank from applying a mercenary impulse to the girl's mind; so he ended the conversation thus:

"I would not pry into thy feelings, Abigail, dear, but I am confident that thee will perceive, when he shall speak to thee, that he is an exceptional man and fit to be the husband even of so dear a girl as thee."

In response to a request from Isaac that George

would come to see him within a day or two, the farmer drove over to Connock the next evening before darkness had fallen, and when he reached the grey house Abby sat alone upon the front porch, behind the clematis vine. Isaac and Rachel had driven to Plymouth to make a call.

George believed himself fortunate that he found Abby thus alone. He had been brooding over the thought that he saw in the woods on the picnic day that which looked as if Clayton Harley were finding favour with Abby. He had gone home blaming himself for his confidence in the belief, for which there was no warrant in anything but Abby's friendly treatment of him, that she would consent to be his wife whenever he should ask her. He had rested upon that confidence, and put off again and again the obligation he had to speak to her. No other suitor had been in sight; their close relations had been continued so many years without interruption; she seemed to consent to his suit by favouring him with her companionship; she was the kind of woman, he thought, who could never marry any one but a Friend, and he was the only available Friend that came near to her; and so he had taken for granted that which should have had demonstration, and now he thought of himself as foolish in not having obtained the word of consent which he believed would be given to him.

The fear of Clayton's rivalry was in his soul; but it was not strong enough to overbear the assurance he had carried with him for years that Abby's destiny was to become his wife. And so, when he greeted her upon the porch this night, with his mind made up that the matter should be ended now, he permitted himself to have no doubt of her answer to his question.

When they had sat together for a little while,

as the ruddy glow in the western sky faded into dull grey, he proposed that they should walk around into the garden, and presently they sat again in the old familiar place upon the rustic bench beneath the apple tree.

Knowing that Abby's parents might at any moment return, George would lose no time in speaking to her of that of which his heart was full.

She sat with her hands folded upon her lap and with thoughts of Clayton coming now and then into her mind. He half turned towards her, when he would speak to her, and with one arm resting upon the back of the bench, he said:

"Does thee remember, Abby, long, long ago, on a First-day morning after meeting, when I was a big boy and thee was just a dear little girl, how I went and plucked a bunch of buttercups over by the south wall of the meeting-house yard, and gave them to thee? And does thee remember how thee blushed all over thy sweet face and put up thy lips to kiss me; and how Friend Armbruster came to thee when thee would pin the posy to thy frock and said thee must not, and how I said thee must, and withstood her and had thee pin it there? Does thee remember all that, Abby?"

"Yes," said Abby, "I remember it very well indeed. And I took the flowers home and pressed them in a book, and, I am not sure, but I think I have them yet."

"I have known thee many years, as a child, as a lass and then as a woman, and thee has seemed somehow to be very near to me and very important to me; but now at times when I think of thee, big as I am, I am half afraid of thee."

"Oh, George! How strange for thee to say such a thing!"

"For Abby the child and for Abby the lass, the

boy was an equal, a comrade, a playmate; but now there is something about thee—the sacredness of thy womanhood, I suppose—that fills me with a kind of awe as I consider thee."

"Perhaps I feel somewhat so of thee, George. Thee is so big and strong and sure, beside my littleness and feebleness; and when I hear thee preach I am sure thee has left me far behind in spiritual things. I have not the Inner Light, George, as thee has it; perhaps I am too much a sinner."

"It shines all about thee, Abby, Thee has but to open the doors of thy soul and it will fill thee with peace. I do not think of thee when I am moved to speak in meeting, but I do believe there is in my mind a sense of thy presence and that it helps me."

"I hear thee with wonder sometimes; and I know that thee speaks not with thine own power. But if the Spirit speak through thee, what am I, forlorn and sinful, that thee should gain anything from me?"

"I will tell thee how it is, Abby. The Divine Love that impels me to preach urges me to cherish thee. It has many forms, and one form is that which makes thee seem precious to me above every other earthly thing."

Abby had seen whither he led the talk, and now she began to dread that he should continue it.

"Did thee say," asked George, "that thee had kept the little bunch of flowers I gave thee long ago? The memory must be pleasant to thee, then."

"Yes, George."

"When I gave it to thee, though I was but a boy and thee a child, I loved thee, Abby."

"I knew it, George."

"And did thee know I had loved thee every day—

yea, truly, every day and every hour since that time?

"I thought so."

"I love thee now, dear Abby, far, far more than I have ever done! Thee is with me in my thought always. When I wake in the morning I think first of our Father, and then that he has been very gracious in teaching me to love thee. I carry thee with me into my toil and my perplexities; into my reading and my meditation. Thee goes with me into the harvest field and into the market place. I sit alone upon my porch and look out over the hills and the river and thee is there. When the dusk comes about me and I can see only the lights flashing in the valley and the shining stars above me, I am not lonely if I have the vision of thy dear face before me. I have thee in my prayers, for always I pray for thee that thee may for ever have sweetness and holiness in thy life, and that thee may give thy love to me. Has God answered that prayer, Abby? Does thee indeed love me as I love thee?"

The tears were trickling upon her face. She feared to speak. What should she say? She could not bear with a word to blast this man's hope and to rob him of the desire of his whole life. He seemed so high and beautiful to her, too; and for an instant Clayton was mean beside him.

"Thee does not answer me," said George, when she hesitated to reply. "Surely thee knows thy mind, for thee says my love was not hidden from thee."

"It is hard for me to find just the right word to say to thee," she said. "Thee has not spoken to me before, and I did not look for thee to speak to me in this way now, and thus I am unprepared. Indeed, I am in sore difficulty and perplexity, and I know not what to do."

"Thee would have no difficulty, would thee, if thee loved me truly and thy soul answered to mine? Thy hesitation fills me with fear."

"It must not be so," she said; and then turning her face to his she laid her hand upon his arm, and speaking tenderly, she continued: "Thee is my old and very, very dear friend. Thee seems somehow a part of my life, and if thee should scorn me or turn from me I should have bitter pain. I could not give up thy friendship. But, dear George, when thee demands my love thee asks something I cannot quite control. I am not sure. Must it be settled now?"

"If thee is not sure, then I dread that thee does not love me; and if thee does not love me now, how can I hope that thee ever will? Oh, my precious Abby! I did not conceive that this was possible. I thought thee safely mine always, and there was no future for me in my plan of life but thee was with me as my darling wife."

"I am not worthy to be thy wife, George."

"Do not speak so of thyself, Abby. It angers me, and thee must remember that truth is too sacred even for humility to trespass upon it. Thee is more than worthy, and if thee could love me and give thyself to me, I would surrender all my life to thee and give thee happiness. Thee cannot guess what I would be willing to suffer for thy sake. When I think of thee it seems as if I could not be content until I have shown thee the greatness of my love by enduring some great pain for thee. How shall I do that? Must it be that I can prove my love only by patience under the fierce anguish of losing thee? The bitterness of death would be in that, but I will do it for thee, dearest, if thee cannot find peace with me."

Again she put her hand upon his arm, and tried

to frame her white face into a smile. Her smile faded instantly when she looked at his face clouded with disappointment.

"Dear George," she said, "thee does high honour to me by giving to me a love so noble. I believe thee fully. Thee is capable of complete self-renunciation, but I should have much sorrow if I caused thee pain. I wish—indeed, indeed I wish—that I could love thee as thee loves me, but, George, I cannot. At least I cannot now. Can we not wait? Who can tell what the future may have for thee and for me?"

"And meanwhile? What shall I do if I cannot be with thee in the old way? If I cannot have joy in thy company? Could thee bear to go with me to meeting and elsewhere with matters as they are?"

"Yes, thee must not forsake me. I need thy help, thy kind words, thy strong example. Stay by me and let me find comfort in thy dear friendship; and now that I know thy heart more fully, perhaps out of all this perplexity there may come some vision of the right way. Perhaps thee may find thy feelings for me change."

"Never!" said George.

The fear grew upon him, as she gently thrust his love away from her, that he had guessed truly when he saw her walking with Clayton upon the forest road. Clayton's name came to his lips and almost to his utterance now that he could find no other explanation for Abby's repulsion of him than that the stranger had won her heart. But he restrained himself. He could not find courage to demand that she should surrender even to him a confidence so sacred. He was oppressed, however, by the thought that if indeed the girl loved Clayton Harley, all this talk about friendship and fellowship between

her and George Fotherly was but an attempt to screen the truth from him, and to soothe him and allay his suspicions until secrecy should be no longer possible. He would not tell his thought to Abby, but after a moment's silence he said to her:

"Thee speaks of my friendship being a comfort to thee; but what is to be the end of it? If thee should not give thy heart to me, thee will give it to another, and then thee will want no comfort from me, and friendship will seem but a poor, cold thing. Thee perceives, does thee not, that love is a matter for two, not for three? If I am not thy husband I am nothing to thee. If thee is a wife but not mine, friendship will be but ceaseless pain to me. I can bear to live with less than love from thee if thee remains as thee is, but what shall life be, if thee loves another? The path is very dark for me even now."

"I think I shall never marry, George," said poor Abby, feeling as if her secret were a sore burden as this man spoke to her so earnestly. If she could just tell him all, how great the relief would be! But this was impossible.

"That has been idly said, many, many times," was George's answer. "It has no meaning usually. What thee means I do not try to fathom. God made men and women for marriage as their best destiny."

"I do not intend to speak lightly, or to deny that thee speaks truly. Indeed, it seems to me now, as I consider everything, that I shall not marry; but, George, would it comfort thee at all if I should say to thee that I will never marry any one but thee?"

George hesitated. "It might be selfish," he said, "and most unkind to thee if I should suffer thee to bind thyself with such a promise. No, I

will not have thee do it, though I cannot hide from thee that thee tempts me sorely when thee speaks of it."

"I will marry none but thee!" she said, again putting her hand upon his arm, and looking with grave eyes upon him. "I trust, dear George, thee will forgive me that I can go no farther. I thank thee from a full heart that thee has given me thy love and that thee deals so generously with me."

He took her hand and both of them rose from the bench on which they sat.

"If I might kiss thy hand as I thank thee?" he said, and he looked timidly at her while he moved to lift her hand to his lips.

"Lean down to me," she said, "while I tell thee something."

Then, still holding his hand, as he bent his head to her she put her other hand upon his shoulder and gently kissed his lips.

"I owe thee that, my dearest friend, for all thy love and thy goodness to me. How shall I ever repay thee?"

She saw the tears glisten in his eyes as they drew apart, and turning into the garden path, slowly walked to the house, and her heart was sore for him. His thought went back to that other woman whose hand he had kissed, and he saw with vision clearer than it had ever been, that hell or heaven may be in one act.

That other woman, passing the south window in the second story of the parsonage, saw Abby give to the Quaker preacher the pure kiss of friendship. She was both amused and angry.

"The sly little hussy!" she said. "She wants to flirt with them both. Or has she indeed thrown Clayton clear over? And that is the stern moralist who prayed heaven for forgiveness because I let

him kiss my hand! I am beginning to get light on these demure Quakers!"

Hardly had A[illegible]nd George found their way to the porch w[illegible]saac's carriage came to the front gate, and he and Rachel greeted George. Rachel knew the purpose of George's coming, and summoning Abby, the two women entered the house, leaving the men together in the darkness that had begun to gather behind the vine-wrapped pillars.

After some random talk, Isaac explained to George the condition of his finances—a familiar story—and asked him to lend him five thousand dollars upon the security of the house. George was grave.

"Thee should consider very seriously, Friend Isaac," he said, "before thee mortgages thy home."

"George, I have considered. It is the only bit of property I have unburdened. In truth, it is not mine, but Rachel's; and she is willing to bond it so that my present difficulties may be bridged over."

"But what reason has thee for thinking thee will be in a stronger position when this new money is gone?"

"It will carry me to the end of the losing contract which has borne so heavily upon me, and leave me a remainder which will enable me to stock up and run the furnace with high prices for my product."

"Thee is right not to be despondent, but thee will forgive me if I say I remember more than once before thee has been very sanguine only to encounter further disappointment."

"Disappointment!" said Isaac, bitterly. "Yes, that has become a familiar companion. But I must risk it a[illegible]in, or fail and give up the furnace."

"Why does thee not take a partner who has some money?" asked George.

"Find me a fit one and I will," answered Isaac. "I will gladly take thee if thee will come with me."

George laughed gently. "No, no!" he said. "I know nothing of iron manufacture. I should prove another burden for thee to carry."

"I should have no fear of that. Thee has the gift of good fortune. Everything thee touches seems to turn to gold."

"Alas!" said George, "thee sadly misjudges me. Each heart knoweth his own bitterness; and if thee could know mine as I know it, Friend Isaac, thee would perceive that I too have painful failures and disappointments."

"But thy business enterprises always have success!"

"Yes," George answered, "I suppose they do." And then he thought how gladly he would exchange success there, for the word of promise that he longed for from the lips of this unhappy man's daughter. Then he said:

"I cannot see thee suffer, and I will stand by thee, Friend Isaac, but thee knows my means are not limitless, and I cannot safely go much further."

"It is the last time, George. The very last time."

"And then, of course," continued George, when he had reflected for a moment, "thee fully recognizes that the security given by this house is not for me the best security."

"Why not?"

"Thee knows that I would not foreclose on thee, Friend Isaac. Should I, for the sake of these dollars, take thy roof from the heads of thy wife and daughter? I could never recover the money unless I should survive all three of you, and I am not likely to do that."

"But thee will let me have the money? There will be no reason for foreclosure. I shall surely pay thee the interest promptly."

"I am sure thee will try. Yes, make thy mind easy; thee shall have it."

"I thank thee heartily for thy kindness." Isaac stopped. Then he moved uneasily upon his chair; he cleared his throat twice or three times. George perceived that he had something more to say and found the task not an easy one.

"I have thought sometimes, George," he said at last, "that the property might all go to thee at any rate, when Rachel and I are gone."

"How is that?" asked George, with a suspicion of his meaning.

"I hardly know if I am right in expressing myself, but we are old friends and thee has been most generous to me, so I may be pardoned if I say that Rachel and I have thought thee had regard for Abby. I do not know if thee has or what thy purpose is, but I may tell thee plainly that, even if thee were a poor man, that would give us joy."

"But Abby must control that, does thee not think?" said George gently.

"I am sure she cares for thee," said Isaac.

CHAPTER IX

THE OTHER WOMAN

WHEN George mounted his horse to return home, Abby and her mother came from the house and stood with Isaac at the gate to bid him farewell. He waved his hand to them as he turned the horse into the highway, and while the dusk began to deepen into night slowly made his way downward toward the river. When he had crossed the bridge and traversed the bit of road that wound about the roaring blast furnace, whose blazing torch covered all the near landscape with ruddy light, he passed the corner of the rock at the mouth of the cleft in the hill through which he must go to reach the summit. In that canyon, deep between the hills and almost overarched by the great trees that bordered it, there was darkness made blacker by the glare of the furnace flame that fell on rock and field and tree by the river edge. Only the grey floor of the roadway was visible, and that, as it came to a turn in its winding movement upward, disappeared abruptly now and then so that there seemed to be a barrier to further progress. If George had wheeled about he might have had glimpses through the trees of the lights that marked the line of the street upon the Connock hill. But he did not turn; he pushed onward in the sombre depth of the pass that had in it the hush of the night, save for the tramp of the horse-hoofs and the plashing of the rivulet that ran down by the thick bushes close by the road among the boulders that obstructed its course to the river.

Man and horse knew well the way, and the man,

with the rein lying loose upon the neck of the beast, heeded neither the heavy gloom of the pathway nor the soft music of the hurrying brook, for the shadow upon his soul was deeper than that which involved his road.

Until he had parted from the people at the grey house and freed himself from the bustle of the village street, he could not command his faculties to examine attentively the strange condition in which he had been placed by his interview with Abby. Before he saw her in the wood with Clayton on the picnic day, the thought that she might not be his wife had never once come to him. Ever since as a youth marriage had become a part of his plan of life, he had regarded union with Abby Woolford as a certainty; and when, after Clayton had appeared to him as a possible rival, he had reflected upon his lifelong friendship with her, upon her indisputable liking for him, and the improbability that she would be strongly attracted to one who was not a Friend, he had still been confident that Abby would accept him when he should offer himself.

And now his mind was so bewildered by disappointment and grief and the complete subversion of all his plans, that he found it hard to frame a reasonable conjecture of the motive for Abby's strange conduct. That Clayton Harley had in some manner involved himself with her he believed; but, if she cared at all for Clayton, why should she voluntarily pledge herself never to marry any one but George Fotherly? There was, for George, a comforting element of hopefulness in that pledge, and yet he was enough master of his reason to perceive clearly that if she loved him she would not have refused him, and if she did not love him now what hope could there be that she would ever

love him? No woman could have had a better chance to know her mind about a man than Abby had had in her long and close fellowship with him. She must have thought often of him as a suitor, and considered if she would take him for her husband. She had refused to take him when first he came to her and entreated her; how then should she incline to do so upon a future day?

Her preference for another man alone could explain her reluctance to commit herself to George, and in whatever manner that fact could be explained, George found growing in his heart fierce hatred of Clayton. The more he brooded over the loss of the affection that was rightfully his, and the tragic mischance that had summoned a frivolous boy to snatch his beloved one from him and to stab him to the heart, the more his rage deepened. Of all the wrongs he had known in this world of bitter injustice, it seemed to him the most atrocious that this stranger should have come at such a time and found favour with the woman who was precious to him. For Clayton to be preferred would have been humiliating had George not loved Abby, but to be supplanted where he had given affection which was almost exalted into worship was maddening.

He regarded the usurper with malevolence that became ferocious as he cherished it. Swelling within his breast was deadly hatred which, as he pressed forward among the shadows of the road, gained such proportions that he found luxury in permitting his imagination to think of himself as seizing the Southerner and slaying him and trampling upon him and tearing him asunder. The Quaker became a savage. Hell swept in upon his soul as his passion rose into fury. He became cruel with hate and pain. He held his teeth hard together and breathed fiercely through them, and

struck his clenched hand upon his thigh. To be rid of his rival and to hold Abby for himself, he felt as if he could steep his hands in blood. And as he nursed his rage and found a kind of exultant joy in it, the thought, which would press upon him, of his religious profession and his preaching of the Gospel, was repelled with angry disdain. They seemed half contemptible. The fire within his brain burned with such volcanic fury that he was almost ready to sacrifice everything—his faith, his life and his hopes—and to plunge forward to perdition if he might rend the heart of Clayton Harley.

Then, when the wave of wild passion reached its topmost height and the darkness of the glen was sunshine in comparison with the black misery of his spirit, the revulsion came. He shuddered to find within him the murderous wish that, as he well knew, carried with it almost the guilt of murder. In upon him poured, as in a flood, the meaning of what he had been; of the call that had come to him to follow Christ; of his obedience to the summons; of the radiance with which the Spirit had filled the secret chambers of his being; of his ministry of exhortation in the meeting-house; of the sweet serenity and peace that had been his when he had heeded the Voice that spoke to him within; above all, of the hours he had spent in wrestling prayer against temptation, and of the mighty victories he had won as he came forth from the chamber where he had met with God.

By nature fierce and passionate, the conflict with evil often had been hard, but now he was sure that all the other battles of his Christian warfare were trifling compared with that he must fight against this new and frightful temptation to hate his rival. He would try to make the fight by remembering the suffering of Christ and the burden of

obligation that lay upon George Fotherly to endure even bitterest suffering patiently for Christ's sake, and to vanquish, as the Saviour did, the Satanic force that assailed him. He saw suddenly with horror that however terrible the loss that had come to him from the supplanter, far more terrible was the wild-beast passion that had almost mastered him and made him an assassin. Then he turned his thought strongly to Christ as his one hope and his salvation, and lifting high his hand he cried piteously to Him as if to ask Him for help.

The horse, startled by the cry and the gesture, shied to the side of the road and thrust the rider's leg harshly against the rock. George came back at once it seemed to him from another world, and then ashamed and penitent, but with a lighter heart, he put his horse to the canter, and soon came to his gateway.

It was open, and he hurried to the house. When the man had taken away the horse, George entered the hall, where the lights were burning, and flung his hat and whip and gloves upon the table.

The house seemed lonely and still—still but for the slow click, click of the tall clock that stood in the recess by the dining-room door. George had often thought of the day when he should bring a beloved wife into that hall, and make her mistress of all the house. He laughed bitterly now as, throwing himself into an armchair opposite the clock, he remembered his happiness when he had dreamed of Abby standing there, and how fulfilment of that dream had now become impossible. His house was empty and forlorn. There would be no mistress now; bachelorhood was to be his doom, drear solitude with the round of care and toil from which all joy was vanished. He counted over the farmer friends about him who had wives and sweet do-

mestic life. The preciousness of these possessions had often been borne in upon him, but never as it was now when the door to the fair kingdom of Love was shut in his face. The bachelor men of his years whom he knew, what had they for compensation? Some were profane and of gross conduct; some were queer and unpleasant. He could not think of life as they lived it without feelings of repulsion. The longer he dwelt upon the two alternatives the deeper the woman-hunger came upon him, and the more intolerable existence appeared to him without a partner into whose life he could merge his own.

He glanced upward as the thoughts chased each other through his mind, and from the picture-frame George Fox seemed to be looking at him with those strange dark eyes that had something unearthly in them. George Fotherly arose from his chair and walked to the foot of the staircase. Turning, the eyes were still upon him. With a slight laugh, he went to the other end of the hall by the front door and the eyes of the picture followed him. He came back, and standing before the engraving he looked straight at the face of the first Quaker, and said in half-mocking voice:

"What hast thou to say to me about this business, thou leathern-breeched Friend? Can I learn anything of thee? All through thy youth, and until far on toward the end of thy life, thou didst not know the love of woman; or didst thou fear it, George? Was it true of thee, thou ancient Quaker, that thou perceivedst a snare in the pressure of the soft hand and the sweetness of the kiss of one who should love thee; and so, while thou didst strive to climb the heights of holiness thou didst shun it all as if it had a taint of sin? Was it in recompense for this self-mastery that thy vision was made so

clear that thou couldst read the very souls of men, and even foresee the shadow of death creeping upon them? Was it revealed to thee, Friend George, as thou camest nearer and nearer to the Almighty, that it is better for man to be alone, and that the price of sainthood is the supremest sacrifice? No, for when thou hadst learnt to breathe the very breath of Heaven thou didst not any longer suffer Paul to be thy counsellor, but didst consider in what manner a far holier One made the marriage of the man with the woman the type of his own mystical union with his bride, the Church. Didst thou not then find that it was altogether well for thee, thou strange, clean-souled, highly-gifted George, that God had given thee one to love thee better than she loved herself, and to be thy dear consort for ever and for ever in the Heaven of Heavens? I would that thou couldst speak to me now, instead of fixing thine eyes upon me, and tell me which is better. The high spiritual things were reached by thee without a wife, but God has given to me a love of woman with which it seems to me I might, her sweet counsel helping me, go surely heavenward and uplift her with me, hand in hand. I honour thee and fain would follow thee—but not alone—until I too shall be permitted to see His face.

"And thou, William?" he said wheeling about and looking at the portrait of Penn which hung upon the other wall. "I see in thine eyes no strange, wonderful light from the spirit world. Thy face is bland and smiling. Thou art well fed and carnal. I see thy courtier practice in thy countenance. Shall I take counsel of thee, thou smug and prosperous Quaker, who knowest little of the discipline of adversity? If George says 'marry not in youth,' and thou sayest 'I married

twice,' where then lieth my path of wisdom and felicity? Shall a man truly love two women in perfect spiritual union, or is it possible that love is but once and for one and then for ever? And if so, William, which one was thy first love and last, and which one hast thou claimed in Heaven? William, I like not thy example, more than I like that smirk upon thy rotund face which is an offence to me whilst my heart is bitter. Thee and George have no comfort for me in my sorrow. I leave thee to adjust thy differences, and I take with me my own sacred passion for my dearest. If God shall give her to me, I will marry her in despite of George. If God shall then take her away from me, I will marry no other, in despite of William."

He turned away, and flinging open the front door, went out into the darkness and, sitting in his great chair, he put his hands over his face, and held them there while they were wet with tears.

When he had grown calmer he looked out through the night over the valley below him and permitted his thought to dwell upon Abby. She seemed lovelier and more precious than ever now that the chance was become small that he would ever possess her. His imagination and his passion glorified her.

The ideal woman in each man's mind never lives physically. The real woman may be disappointing. Now and then she is vulgar. The young lover who has tasted spiritual love is always sure he has found her; but her radiance is dimmed by the commonplace of familiar daily life. It is the woman of the mind that men love and long for; the woman who does not and in the flesh cannot exist. They dream of her, and always she has perfect loveliness; the sweet spirit and physical beauty without flaw or wrinkle. Old married lovers find their ideal coming nearer and nearer

as they both become less and less comely in body. The pure in heart will have their dreams come true in Heaven. The ideal woman is the possible woman—possible spiritually. We foretaste Heaven as we yearn for her. *There*, in the union of two pure natures in one being the true woman will be for ever the spouse, the light, the life and the joy of the man whom God has made her husband.

When marriage had appeared to George to be a thing he could turn to at any time he had put it by for a convenient season. Always he felt that he had but to ask Abby and she would at once consent; why, then, should he ask her until all things were ready? Then he would permit his lips to speak the love that was in his heart and hers, and then he would make her his wife and bring her to the home he had prepared for her upon the hill-top. But when all his plans were roughly overset, and easy, tranquil, complacent movement towards wedlock was no longer possible, then, suddenly, he found within himself an imperious wish for speedy marriage.

As he sat there and considered his vanished hopes and frustrated plans the sense of loneliness deepened within him, and to have a wife and mistress for his home seemed so necessary to his peace that he felt as if he could not longer wait for her.

Never before, whilst the love of a woman was assured to him, had he known with what fierceness the soul may hunger for its mate. Now, with his own desire baffled and his heart craving the love that was denied it, he thought of the myriads of women, helpless and voiceless, who sit with folded hands hiding deep their strong yearnings for wifehood and motherhood; and of the sad mute tragedy of the loveless lives whose longings are smothered, whose passion smoulders, and which wait famishing and sorrowful for those who will never come. "He

cometh not!"—that, he now for the first time discerned, is the wailing heart-cry of multitudes who dare not speak the words, but who in silent anguish surrender the secret, passionate hope that gave to existence all its brightness.

But for the man, he thought, the case is different. He is the waited-for. He need not suffocate his nature. If one woman shut him out, another may open her heart to him; and the earth swarms with lovely women. Is there none for George Fotherly? His hand fell upon the table whereon Dolly Harley had made venture into the mysteries of palmistry. Like a flash of light the remembrance of her darted in upon his mind. He drew a short breath, and his heart-beat quickened. He arose, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, he strode up and down the lengths of the porch. He saw her face and her form; he caught the sound of her voice; he heard her bright gay laugh. She had favoured him, surely. He had thought her free and forward; but by what right, indeed, should he judge her? What was his skill in woman's ways? Was it not presumption for him to believe that he could read her soul? Might he not have mistaken the mere innocent lightness and gaiety of this young creature for an offence, and was he not guilty of uncharitableness? He felt disposed to repent his harshness. The stern severity of the Quaker preacher was not the right measure of the conduct of one who had grown up among the world's people. At any rate, she was fair and alluring, and she was a woman, and the longing for woman-help was strong in his soul just now; so why should he not see her once more, and, while finding pleasure in her company, make another estimate of her?

The thought rushed in upon him that she asked him to ride with her. He would accept the invita-

tion. No harm could come from that. Abby could not object to it. He was resolved not to move one inch away from her in his deeper feeling, nor would he permit the other woman to be more to him than she had been. But ride with her he would; and when he entered the house his mind had been made up to see her or to write to her on the morrow.

On the morrow, still resolute to fulfil his purpose, he drove over in the morning to the parsonage, and when he came back again he had with him in the carriage Dolly Harley, full of delight that she should once more ride upon the horse with which she had a brief frolic on the picnic day.

And when they reached George's house she waited in her riding dress while the horses were made ready, and then when George had placed her upon Major and had mounted his own stout horse, together she and her companion cantered down the curved driveway to the gate and out upon the country road that ran along the summit of the plateau. The horseman and his companion were notable figures as they passed swiftly over the lonely highway. She gave to him her approval at once as she saw the grace and mastery with which he controlled the great beautiful bay horse that carried him. "No Southern gentleman could ride more elegantly," she said to herself. Big and handsome he was when he stood upon the ground, but astride the huge beast he seemed to have gained in force until he looked to the girl to be possessed of a giant's strength, while his calm quiet face, with its deep-set eyes, spoke to her of power of intellect and of character.

She could have gone away from him for ever and never felt a pang of regret, and yet as she rode beside him and looked at him, she exulted

in him. And he, glancing now and then at her as her form swayed to the motion of the horse, with her dark hair flying behind her, with her cheeks glowing with the exercise, and with her black eyes radiant with pleasure, felt glad to be with her.

It is but a rough classification of the sentiment that lies between men and women to put spiritual love by itself and to call every other thing love of the sex. Spiritual love does indeed stand alone—high, holy, heavenly, having eternity for its portion; all other love is slight and complete, absorbing, final; it is soul-fusion; the return of the two half-natures to wholeness; the end of the cycle which began with that act represented in the allegory as the removal of the rib from the breast of the man. But everything else is not tainted with brutality. The girl in this case had irrepressible admiration for the physical man, and it was a necessary part of her woman nature that his bodily force and beauty should attract her strongly; but she would have found no charm in him had there not been something much more admirable. His intellectual superiority counted for much, but even that was less alluring than the manly force which showed itself in all he said and did as the result of lofty character.

If she had been asked to marry him she would have doubted. That he was rich was an agreeable fact to consider; but she was not poor. His religious faith and practice were upon the whole repulsive. Spiritual things being spiritually discerned, she, who had no spiritual experience, thought all the things that she encountered in his religious conduct either dreary or absurd. Even if she had loved him, the fact that he was a preacher would have been a count against him which would have impelled her to consider before she accepted him. His attitude toward religion was quite as incompre-

hensible to her as it would have been to a pagan savage. Nor was her curiosity about it excited by this strong man's devotion to it. She had no care to study the phenomenon. She regarded the whole matter with feelings of repugnance, particularly when George made her the subject of his sermon. But she liked him, and liked him much because the conscious but unconfessed weakness of her woman-nature discerned in him the strength that it craved, but more, far more than this, because she plainly saw that she attracted him. Whether he might love her or not she did not estimate; nor did she think what sacrifice she would make for him or how far she would go with him if he should beckon her. She found pleasure in his companionship, and in his admiration of her, and she would taste that pleasure, without regarding the future for him or for her.

As for the man, he could not help but that his eyes should find feast for themselves in her beauty; that they would have done at any time, while a restrained spirit kept itself from evil. But now he had a great longing for woman-help and woman-sympathy, and this woman's presence was a kind of consolation for him. She was graceful and gentle and considerate. Her ways were pretty; she was free and joyous with him, but chiefly there was a kind of subtle deference in her manner which he felt and liked. No matter what his spiritual exaltation or the measure of his love for another woman, he was not exempt from the law that impels men to covet women's praise more than any other thing, and to shrink with dismay from their disdain. And this woman plainly was ready to give him the approval that he coveted. She pleased him more and more as he remained with her. Clearly he had misjudged her heretofore. She was not evil. She

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might be flippant; but there was loveliness too; and perhaps if right influences could be brought to bear she might become wholly lovely. Her companionship made him joyful. He began to think whether he might not be willing to consider her seriously. If Abby were beyond his reach, why should he not stifle his love for her and look about for another woman who should speedily become his wife? He did not like the thought at first; but, as he rode along, he found his mind coming back to it again and again, while Dolly chatted and laughed and turned her bright, handsome face repeatedly to him.

Soon they came into the Gulf road, and moving swiftly forward they passed down into the valley that ran upward from the river, then through the great gap in the hills into which Washington's ragged army thrust itself on its way to its dismal encampment at Valley Forge, and then up the hill again to the border of the forest that stretches away to the southward.

Into this they entered by a narrow road which compelled them to keep close together, and deeper and deeper they plunged in the woods, breathing the scent of the evergreens, of the mosses and the dead leaves, and all the soft perfumes of the forest, until at last they came to a place where the little brook ran clear across the road beneath a frail wooden bridge.

Here George stopped his horse. Helping Dolly to dismount, he gave the beasts drink from the rivulet and then tied their heads to the crumbling rail-fence beside the bridge. Beyond the fence the brook widened into a clear pool of sweet running water in an open place wherein the tiny ferns grew thickly and clumps of wild roses bloomed among the trees.

Dolly was in high spirits. She thought the

place strangely beautiful, and her companion delightful. The sombreness of the preacher had vanished with the strong exercise of the ride, and with a touch of grace lent to him by his Quaker speech he talked to her as gaily as if he had never known a serious thought.

They lingered but for a few moments, and then, when they would make ready to remount, he plucked a wild rose from the bush and pinned it upon her bosom.

"Flowers," he said, "are never so lovely as when fair women wear them."

Upon horseback again they returned through the shadows of the trees to the Gulf road, and went onward for miles and miles toward the region where Valley Forge lies deep among the hills.

Then George, who had been forgetful of all else but his interest in his companion, perceived that the sky was darkened in the west, and that a great storm was impending. He spoke of it to Dolly and they stopped their horses.

"We have not time enough," he said, when he had reflected for a moment, "to reach home. I think it would be better to press forward that we may find shelter in the sheds of the Valley Meeting."

So they started again, and beneath a black sky that had made all the landscape dark they came to the yard of the meeting-house, and as they entered it the first raindrops fell. They hurried across the enclosure, and had but fairly reached the sheds when the storm broke with fury.

Beneath the sheds they stood, upon horseback, for a little while, and then George said:

"The storm will not soon be over, and it is damp and dismal here. Would thee not rather wait within the meeting-house?"

"If you think it better," answered Dolly.

George leaped from his horse and tried the door

of the house close by the end of the sheds. It opened to his thrust. He helped Dolly to descend and they went into the building, which was so dark that at first they could hardly see it plainly.

"Sit there, Friend Harley," he said, leading her to a seat. "We shall be safer and more comfortable here. I am sorry I should have led thee so far from home on so ill a day."

"I am not at all sorry," she answered. "We are away from the rain, and I think it delightful to be here in so odd a place under such circumstances."

"It is the Valley Meeting-house. I know it well," said George. "I feel quite at home under its roof."

"Can two people have a meeting?" she asked in jest.

George instantly thought of a sweet and refreshing meeting he once had with Abby in her garden.

"Yes," he answered, "but we will not attempt it here. Reverence is required."

"And you think me irreverent! You may preach to me. Why," she asked, suddenly turning the conversation, "did you care to have me ride with you to-day? You scolded me when last you saw me."

"I had promised thee a ride; and then——"

"And then! What then?"

"I was lonely. I wanted companionship."

"Mine?"

"Yes. There are times when a lonely man longs for woman's help and sympathy."

"But you can have that whenever you want it."

"How?"

"If a woman will kiss you she will come to you."

"I do not understand thee," he said, but in truth he suspected she had seen Abby kiss him. Dolly would make no explanation.

"Did you notice," she asked, "that Clayton and Abby were very friendly? I thought she fancied him."

George felt his heart beat fast. He was half angry. Dolly continued:

"And I was pleased. She is a dear girl, and would make a lovely wife for Clayton. But I am beginning to be doubtful of her, after all."

"Why?"

"You are not engaged to her?"

"No."

"The kiss of friendship," she said, "and the kiss of love must be different."

"Very different," answered George gravely.

"Is there a third kind?"

"I do not know."

"You asked forgiveness of Heaven when you kissed my hand the other day. Was that a greater offence than kissing lip to lip?"

"It is a perilous topic for discussion," he said. "But I must speak plainly with thee. I perceive thee witnessed that which passed between Abby and me in the garden yesterday. I owe it to her to tell thee she had just brought great grief to her old playmate and friend whom, without shame, she might kiss to express her sorrow. I pray thee think no harm of it."

"I should not have jested about it," she said, becoming grave and dropping her eyes to the floor. "surely if I could help you in your trouble I would."

He looked at her eagerly, and a strong impulse urged him to give her his confidence and to take comfort from her; but his better judgment restrained him.

"Thee is very good and kind," he said, "but sorrow is its own best counsellor."

"I was foolish," she answered, "to suppose that one so weak as I could be helpful to a strong

man, but indeed I am deeply sorry that you suffer."

"Thee has helped me already by thy bright and happy companionship; and thee makes me grieve that I was harsh with thee the other day."

"I have forgiven it," she said, looking up at him. "You thought it your duty to preach to me, but I do not like preaching, even if I am in sore need of it. When you rise so far above me you frighten me; but I should be but half a woman if I saw you sorrowful and did not feel concern for you. It is but a little thing indeed if I can bring you any comfort by riding with you, for that for me is self-indulgence, not self-sacrifice."

The room grew darker, the storm more violent.

"Thee is not afraid of the storm?" asked George.

"If I were alone surely I should be. But not while you are with me. Strange, is it not, that everything seems more terrible when one is alone? You cannot protect me from the storm, but because you are here I fear nothing. Were you not here I should imagine I saw peril in every shadow in the room"

"It is my deep sense of loneliness in sunshine and in storm that makes me glad to have thee for my companion, even for a little while."

"Men and women need each other for comrades as well as consorts, don't they? Can we not just be friends, sometimes?" asked Dolly.

"I wish it might be so, were there no peril in it. But thee will have no peril if I might call thee my friend."

"No peril that you will chide me?"

"I will not chide thee. I will cherish thee if thee will be just my comrade as a man might be, to give me solace and cheer. But thee will not consent to take up that burden, will thee?"

"If I were worthy to be so near to you and to

have your favour; but you do not in your heart think that of me."

"I think thee very sweet and gracious, and that I am but a poor creature with strong hunger in my soul for blessing from such a hand as thine. Comrades! It is a word of promise and encouragement! I call thee comrade now"

"I will answer to the name if you will have it so, and I will give you a token of my comradeship."

She rose and came near to him. Loosening from her bosom the flower he had put there, she leaned over and fastened it upon his coat. It seemed to him she kissed it while her head was drooping, and he smelled the perfume of her splendid hair. She put her hand upon the rose to keep it in its place, while she looked up at him.

"Comrades!" he said, and his hands were upon her arms. She was very still, and her eyes seemed misty as he gazed down into them and held her there. Then beneath his steadfast look her eyelids fell, and gently turning her face away she hid it upon the sleeve of his coat. She felt the tremor that passed through him. In the swirl of his mind he could think of no other word he dared to say.

She withdrew suddenly from his grasp, and facing the door she said: "We will go home!"

"Still it is raining," he said, as one suddenly awakened from a dream.

"But we will go at once."

"I cannot permit thee to be drenched by the rain."

"It will not hurt me."

"If thee is in earnest to go, thee will put my coat about thee."

"And have you suffer for me?"

"Yes, my comrade," he answered, "if suffering were to be, but I shall not suffer at all. Here, let me clothe thee with it."

He took off his coat and put it about her, fairly covering her with it. Then he buttoned it from top to bottom and turned up the sleeves for her. With her hand in his, he led her out and lifted her upon the horse, where she sat with no smile upon her face. Mounting his own horse, he came to her side, and through the drizzle of rain they went upon the highway and sharply cantered toward home.

He glanced at her again and again as she rode beside him or for a moment plunged on ahead of him, but she set her face forward, looking neither to right nor to left and making no utterance. She puzzled him; and his conscience was not at ease. He had a dull feeling of guiltiness. Deep down in his soul he knew that he should never be ready to offer marriage to her; and that talk of comradeship was idle where passion at any moment may burst into flame. Yet her attractiveness for him remained, and he could not bring himself to regret that she seemed sweet to him and that her touch upon him had been delicious. He would not now intrude himself upon her if she wished to be silent. Speech from her lips was certain when they reached his home. And so on and on they went, swiftly, side by side, through the rain-pools of the roadway, with the yellow mud splashing the horses and reaching up to the garments of the riders; up hill and downward through the valleys, past stretches of woodland, over bridges that resounded to the clatter of the horses' hoofs, past the great gap and the mill, and up, up, until the level of the plateau was reached, where George's farm stretched its fields to right and to left, and then down the short stretch of road that led to his gate.

George drew his rein as he saw the gate was closed, but his companion quickened the pace of

her horse, urging him forward. George cried sharply to her to stop. But before his voice could reach her she put the horse at the low stone wall that lay around the wheat-field by the gate, and the beast rose to leap it. His forefeet cleared the wall, but he was not a practised jumper, and one of the hind hoofs catching in the coping of the wall he fell, tumbling Dolly Harley over to the side.

In a moment George dismounted and climbed the wall to reach her. He lifted her to her feet, and looking at him wildly she laughed in a strange way and fell fainting into his arms. He resolved at once to carry her to the house, and, neglecting the horses, he held her fast and strode forward. Whether she were hurt or not he could not tell, but he feared for her. He looked at her face, colourless, upturned from his arm. It seemed very lovely. He stooped his head and kissed her. He drew her closer and closer to himself, and kissed her again and again. Before he came to the house she opened her eyes for a moment. He could not tell if she knew what he had done.

When he stepped upon his porch and, despite his burden, tried to open the door of his house, she had recovered.

"Put me upon the chair, please," she said.

"No," he answered, as he thrust open the door and went in; "thee must not try to sit up."

He placed her upon the sofa, and rising, said:

"I will call one of my servants."

"You need not," she said. "I am not hurt, I think. If I have a glass of water I shall be fully restored. It was most foolish for me to act as I did."

George gave water to her. When she had drank she said:

"And you will drive me to Connock now, won't you?"

There was something in her manner that persuaded him she knew that he had kissed her. While he looked at her the colour surged upon her face, and he felt his own cheeks grow hot.

"I thought," he answered, "perhaps it would be better if I should send for thy aunt Ponder, and have her stay here with thee for the night, so that thee should be fully restored."

"You are very, very kind, but I am quite strong enough to go home, and I think it will be better, if I shall not trouble you too much."

George went out and gave the order for the carriage to be made ready. When he returned Dolly tried to rise from the sofa.

"You see," she said, "that I am quite well and strong."

"I am glad," he said, while he took her hand to lift her, "that thee was not severely hurt. I was frightened when thee fell, and I mourned I had not counselled thee not to leap the wall."

"I yielded to a sudden impulse," she answered, "and I did not reflect that I might bring sorrow to you after all your goodness to me."

She walked about the room, looking at the quaint, old-fashioned furniture, and then, with him by her side, they went into the hall.

"What strange eyes that man in the picture has," she said, when she had glanced at the portrait of George Fox. "He looks as if he had seen awful things. He might have been in hell or heaven. I could not bear to have him stare at me long."

George told her who it was.

"Fox was always as incomprehensible to me as if he belonged to another world," she answered.

Then the carriage came, and George put her into it and took his place by her side.

As they drove slowly down the hillside in the

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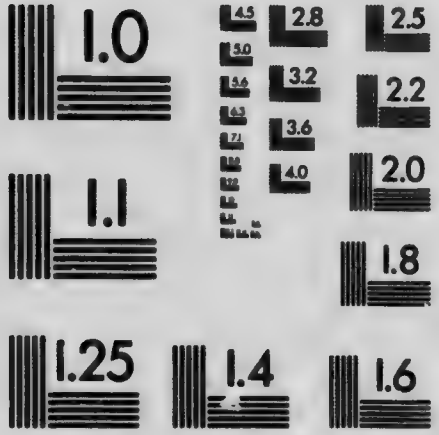

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woods, and then entered the canyon through which George had come in the darkness the night before, he could not help thinking of the kisses he had given her, and he was sure she thought of them.

"And what does she think?" he asked himself.

He could not guess, but he knew that he felt as if he had in some way committed himself to her, and that she might fairly demand of him that he should speak some words of explanation. She seemed more attractive than ever; but the strong impulse he felt to declare that he cared seriously for her, was restrained by his judgment.

"Let us look at it when the spell is broken," he said in his mind.

In truth, after what had passed she half expected that he would speak passionate words to her, and she was in doubt what her answer would be; but the sloping street of Connock was reached before he made any utterance of importance. And so presently they came near to the parsonage, and then she said, with tenderness in her voice and very softly:

"How can I thank you for all the pleasure you have given me to-day? And I may see you once more before I go home, may I not?"

"When does thee return?" he asked.

"Day after to-morrow," she said, and as she spoke both of them saw Abby coming from her front gate, and George's answer was not made because both he and Dolly must speak with her.

When George had helped Dolly to alight, he stood with her for a moment talking with the Quakeress, and then, re-entering the carriage, he turned to go homeward. That moment in Abby's presence had been for him a moment of awakening.

CHAPTER X

DOLLY HARLEY GOES HOME

WHEN Abby saw Dolly in George's company, and when she learned of the ride they had taken together, it was almost inevitable that she should wonder if George, disappointed by her refusal of his offer of marriage, could have had thoughts of addressing himself seriously to Dolly. She could hardly believe that so sane and sedate a man should have turned to another woman so soon after his protestations of love for his old friend; but she confessed to herself that she knew little of the nature of men; and she was quite surprised to find that she could consider, absolutely without jealousy, the possibility that George should make the Southern girl his wife. Abby did have a suspicion that George would find Dolly a partner who would not readily adjust herself to his theories of life, and she realized that it would be quite as hard for Dolly to become a Friend as it would be for George to forsake the Friends' Society; and yet it was clear enough that he could not marry her while she remained among the world's people without being disowned by the Society. Looked at in any way, such a love affair seemed to be involved in deep perplexity, and Abby put it by with a feeling of relief that she should not have to solve the problem. She found it much easier and more agreeable to permit her mind, in all her spare moments, to dwell upon her own love and upon the bewildering difficulties of her own situation.

For George the slow journey homeward was made in company of thoughts very different from those that had distracted him when he traversed the same road on the preceding night. A complete revulsion of feeling from that which had possessed him during the day set in as he drew away from Dolly and the parsonage. He felt himself covered by the stain of sin. There came to him a phrase he had seen somewhere and had retained in his memory of "the wild-flowing, bottomless sea of human passion, glorious in auroral light, which alas may become infernal lightning." He saw plainly that the auroral light shone only about his love for Abby, and that the true aspect of the passion that had swayed him that day was far from celestial.

He tried to justify himself to his conscience by insisting that his longing desire for companionship of woman and for the kind of solace he could find in her sweet sympathy was natural and the gratification of it right; but he did not attempt to deceive himself respecting the things that had happened while he and Dolly had been together. If he had truly loved her and purposed to marry her, he might without offence have held her fast in the meeting-house and perhaps kissed her passionately while he carried her, insensible, to the house; but he did not propose to marry her. He was angry with himself that he had ever for a moment thought of such a thing. He knew that he had not a particle of true love for her, and that both their lives would be ruined if they should permit themselves to wed. Under such conditions his thought and his conduct with respect to her had been completely evil, and for him recognition of his own fault meant deep repentance and complete banishment of the matter from his mind or else the overthrow of the spiritual life he had struggled so hard to obtain.

He saw plainly that he could not preach next Sunday, and probably the next. He could never preach again until his soul was freed completely from all the stain of this wickedness and from every impulse to linger pleasantly with the memory of it. Even now, with the sense of his wrongdoing bearing heavily upon him, and with disgust for himself oppressing his mind, he found the temptation sometimes almost irresistible to permit his imagination to dwell with gratification upon the incidents of which he repented. He was dismayed to discover again, as he had done more than once before, that sin has the dreadful power to repeat itself indefinitely and infinitely through the mind; so that the final curse inflicted by it is that it haunts the soul and shows itself in alluring forms even when the soul would cleave closest to holy things.

By his conduct on that day he had slipped downward far from heights that he had striven, with painful footsteps, to climb, and now he must begin over again and push himself upward under harder conditions and with his courage diminished by his fall. He did not doubt for a moment that he should address himself strenuously to the task; and for a beginning he would resolve now not to see Dolly Harley again. He had not responded to her invitation to come to the parsonage before she left it, and he would not permit her again to exercise upon him the charm of her presence.

"Bunyan was a wise man," he said to himself, "to resolve that he would never even touch a woman's hand in greeting or permit himself to be alone with her."

After bidding farewell to George, Dolly Harley went into the parsonage confident that he would return to her before she left Connock, and her mind was actively engaged in an effort to determine in

what manner she should deal with him when she should see him again.

Her meditations were interrupted by Aunty Ponder, who burned with eagerness to learn something of Dolly's experiences with George during the day.

"You found him an agreeable companion, my dear, didn't you?" said Mrs. Ponder sitting by the window sewing, whilst Dolly lolled in an easy chair in the middle of the room.

"Very agreeable," answered Dolly.

"He is quite an exceptional man in many ways," said her aunt, "and but for his erratic religious opinions, he would be a most desirable husband for any good woman. He is handsome, to begin with, and then he is rich. I don't want to be mercenary, nor would I have you think too much of money, but ministers' wives have good reason for knowing the misery of not having enough. Say what we will about wealth being dross, when rightly used it is a beneficent instrument. There is no use of calling a thing dross and pretending to scorn it when you want forty dollars for a dress and can't get it."

"You needn't fear I shall despise wealth, aunty," said Dolly.

"No; you should neither despise it nor covet it. Anybody who wants to be good can succeed better with some money than without it. If you are harrowed with anxiety about meeting your bills for the necessities of life, you can't fight against temptation to wickedness half so easily as if your mind were at ease about your bread; and then people who have money to spare can cultivate generosity and helpfulness for others in a manner that poor people find quite impossible."

"I fully agree with you," said Dolly.

"And of course, while true love is the first necessity of marriage, possession of wealth by one of the parties is an added joy. You know very well, my dear, that you can have no very large expectations from your father. If the Union cause succeeds in this dreadful war, the value of his slaves will simply disappear, and I doubt if the Sassafras plantation will be worth much. There can be no harm, therefore, for you to consider the worldly circumstances of any man who may appear to find you attractive."

Mrs. Ponder paused, rather hoping Dolly might supply some encouragement to her hopes respecting George; but Dolly remained silent, and looked out of the window while she tapped the arm of her chair with the ends of her fingers.

"I have always thought," continued Mrs. Ponder, "that George would marry Abby; but maybe there is nothing between them but friendship. I wish he would fancy you."

"That is very unlikely, aunty."

"The only possible objection to him would be that his views are unsound, but no doubt you might in time correct them and bring him over. He would be a tower of strength to uncle if he should unite himself with the church. We should make a vestryman of him, and nobody who knows him could doubt that he would be a decided improvement of the common breed of vestrymen."

"I imagine it would be a difficult matter to turn him from the Society of Friends," said Dolly; "and at any rate, I am hardly qualified for the task and not likely to undertake it."

"If uncle could but get hold of his mind!" continued Mrs. Ponder, whose own mind at that moment was more engaged with George's conversion than with Dolly's matrimonial prospects. "No man was ever more happy than uncle in bringing swift

conviction to Quakers. The trouble with them is that they are not properly instructed in religious truth. Most of them know literally nothing of the fathers or the great heresies. Did he talk with you about any of these things? I should like very much to know the ground of his rejection of the theory of Apostolical Succession. I hope you put the facts at him strongly."

Dolly smiled as her mind went back to the passage with George in the meeting-house and to his treatment of her after her fall from the horse.

"The topic did not present itself for discussion," she said.

"What on earth did you talk about all that time, then?" asked Mrs. Ponder. "I really believe he admires you."

"We were riding swiftly along the road most of the time," answered Dolly, "and discussion of Apostolical Succession would be difficult while a horse is jolting you."

"Do you think, then, it would be tactful for me to send him uncle's sermon on Churchmanship? Sometimes the arrow of truth pierces a man's soul as the result of reading a single logical discourse."

Dolly discouraged such an assault upon George.

"The best thing to do, aunty," she said, "if you really want uncle to proselyte him, would be to invite him here and to have uncle talk with him; but how would you feel if Mr. Fotherly should turn the tables and succeed in proselyting uncle?"

"That would be surprising," said Mrs. Ponder, good-naturedly, "and about as likely to happen as that I should become a Mohammedan. But I think, perhaps, my child, you are right. It will be wiser not to let Mr. Fotherly know that we have designs upon him. There is an element of contrariness in human nature which impels a person strongly

to resist that which he ought to do simply because somebody strongly wishes him to do it. I have often urged uncle to take this into account in dealing with people, particularly with our Sunday School boys. No mentally sound boy, for example, cares particularly to fish on Sunday. He would just as lief fish on Saturday. But as soon as you tell him it is wicked to fish on Sunday, his whole being is filled with a burning desire to do it. I have had the same feeling myself sometimes. You know I never had the smallest wish to touch intoxicants, but I have always refused to join our Band of Hope, because I am sure that the minute I sign a total abstinence pledge I shall have a maddening thirst for drink."

Dolly said she fully understood the feeling.

"And so, sometimes, uncle and I have really considered whether perhaps it would not be something of a gain for the cause of morality to command people to do the things that are wrong. Of course, in actual practice we could not venture quite so far, but I do half believe that if it were made a positive duty for boys to fish on Sunday and it were wicked for them to go to church and Sunday School, all the houses of worship would be crowded and the Sunday Schools packed."

Dolly laughed as she said:

"And isn't it queer, aunty, that nearly all the nice things one wants to do should be wrong?"

"Not all, my child, but a good many of them, and they seem nice just because they are wrong. Now, it has often occurred to me that if men could be put under a solemn moral and legal obligation to do wrong, why then wrong would appear repulsive and you would find people coming over in droves to the side of righteousness. But, of course, I know very well we dare not try any such experi-

ment with so serious a matter. As for Mr. Fotherly, if I could induce him to consider the church favourably by having some one attack it in a severe manner, I should hardly like to employ such means. If you can obtain any influence over him you will have to exert it in your own way. Love can do much to sway a person's opinions."

Dolly ended the interview with her aunt by going to her room to pack her trunk, and Mrs. Ponder, left alone, mourned that she had learned nothing of the incidents of the ride or of Dolly's feeling for George.

Upon the next day Dolly waited through the morning, the afternoon and the evening for George to come to take leave of her, and she would have been interested to know that George through all the hours had to struggle with himself to remain away from her.

At last she retired for the night with a faint hope that she might see him in the morning, but with no little vexation and anger that he should have let the day go by without responding to her invitation.

In the morning she went over to the grey house to take leave of Abby and her mother. When Abby met her at the door Abby had a half-read letter from Clayton crushed in her pocket. She had kept the secret from her mother, and she had no purpose to reveal it to Dolly, who wondered at the flush upon the face of the Quaker girl.

"I want Abby to come to Sassafras to see us this very autumn, Mrs. Woolford," said Dolly. "You will permit her to come, won't you?" and Dolly proceeded with enthusiasm to describe the attractions that were to be found at the plantation.

Mrs. Woolford showed no eagerness to accept the invitation, but Dolly was urgent and Abby said

she would like very, very much to go, and so there was a promise that she should go if her father's permission could be gained. Then Dolly kissed them both good-bye and went away. As her train swept towards the city in the [illegible] shadow of the hills on top of which was the Fotherly farm, she was bitter with anger that George should have shunned her after all that had passed between them. He had wounded her self-love, and that is an affront that the best of us sometimes find it hard to forgive.

Mrs. Ponder would have been lonely in the evening of the day of parting from her niece had not Isaac and Rachel Woolford, with Abby, come over to the parsonage to sit awhile with her while Dr. Ponder attended a vestry meeting in the church; and Mrs. Ponder strongly improved the opportunity to praise both Dolly and Clayton, and to speak favourably of Sassafras plantation and of the life there.

Dr. Ponder came upon the porch to greet his guests a little while before they went away. He tried to be cheerful, but Mrs. Ponder, with a loving wife's quick perceptions, discerned that he was troubled.

"What is it, dear?" asked Mrs. Ponder affectionately when the visitors were gone and she and her husband were alone in the darkness. "Something is depressing you."

"It is the vestry-meeting," answered the doctor despondently.

"Were they more disagreeable than usual?"

"Don't let us speak harshly of them, wife. No doubt they are really trying to do their duty as they see it."

Mrs. Ponder emitted a sound significant of scornful impatience.

"As they see it! But what can you expect from such perceptive powers as they have!"

"I sometimes think perhaps my days of usefulness are ended," said the doctor. "I know I have tried to do my best, and I feel as if I had all my faculties in good order, but I remember that men deceive themselves about such things."

"Faculties!" exclaimed Mrs. Ponder. "You have more than any hundred vestrymen I ever knew, and they are more vigorous and useful than they ever were. Did any of the vestry intimate that you were failing?"

"Not exactly, but there were unkind insinuations. I was asked to shorten my sermons."

"It is positively wicked!" said Mrs. Ponder. "There is no better preaching anywhere, and besides, you are not only a rector, you are an oracle, and no one can have any right to dictate to you about your sermons."

"I know how hard it is rightly to divide the Word of Truth, but surely an ordained minister, trained in theology, ought not to be controlled in such a manner by uninstructed laymen!"

"Certainly not."

"Mr. Duckett was kind enough to say that he advocated brevity because my discourses are so full of matter that he can hardly digest them; but I fear he was only trying to be kind and to comfort me."

"He was right about one thing," said Mrs. Ponder positively; "he indicated very accurately his own intellectual limitations."

"And he said, besides, that as my friend he would counsel me to preach less frequently about the Seed of Abraham, and to dwell more on love and less on such texts as that of last Sunday week. 'And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke.' You remember it?"

"It was a most impressive sermon—full of warning for vestrymen; and I am sure you do preach about love very often. What is wanted is that the members of the vestry shall put your precepts into practice."

"What do you think Alfred Togg proposed, wife?" Mr. Togg was the accounting warden and a stock-broker, with a fondness for figures.

"What?" asked Mrs. Ponder.

"He suggested that a sliding scale should be applied to my sermons. For every minute that I preach over twenty minutes, not counting the text, a cent should be taken off of my salary. For every minute less than twenty minutes, two cents should be added to my salary."

"We will never submit to such a degrading proposition," said Mrs. Ponder.

"He also urged that every time I preached an old sermon 'in the raw,' as he called it, ten cents additional should be taken off, and when there is an old sermon partly rewritten, five cents should be deducted. Did you ever hear of anything so preposterous?"

"Never!"

"Then he went on to say that I had preached for thirty minutes twice a Sunday fifty-two times a year for twenty years, and that made 1,040 hours, I think it was, or 43⅓ days. He admitted that the preaching had been faithful, but he asked, very insolently, in my opinion, if I didn't think some consideration was due to a congregation that had had a month and a half of straight preaching. My self-respect forbade me to argue with him."

"You couldn't do it."

"I told him, however, that when sermons were longer the world was better, and then Mr. Latimer said long sermons put people to sleep, and he often

saw them sleeping in our church, and I said the fault was with the bad ventilation and not with the sermons. Then I told them that even when St. Paul preached persons had gone to sleep in church, and no doubt the facts about Eutychus had been recorded in the book of Acts for the comfort of faithful ministers and the confusion of ungenerous vestrymen."

"Eutychus has always been *such* a comfort for you," said Mrs. Ponder.

"And to all ministers. So I offered to prove that I was right about the want of proper ventilation by preaching in the open air on the lawn next Sunday, and if anybody went to sleep to offer my resignation; but they declined to accept. Mr. Togg then asked me how it would do for me to trade sermons with the Congregational minister—'barrel for barrel,' was the way he put it—so that the congregation could have some new views. Imagine, wife, a minister of the Apostolic Church preaching sermons written for one of the sects!"

Dr. Ponder sighed heavily. "Perhaps it were better if I were dead," he said. "I can't resign, for we should starve to death. There seems to be no place for old ministers. I can only say that I have tried always to be faithful."

"And you have been, birdie," said Mrs. Ponder, putting her arm about her husband's neck. "You have been more than faithful. Don't you remember that in your first parish, Judge Watson said he never heard a man whose call to preach was clearer?"

"And I never preached for less than forty minutes there."

"The trouble here is not with the sermons, but with the vestrymen. If the church did its duty it would start a movement for missions for the conversion of vestrymen and particularly of account-

ing wardens. Alfred Togg's religion is hardly rudimentary."

"And that may be my fault, dear, when I have preached to him for so long a time. Yet I have often had him in my mind when preparing my sermons."

"That people who have ears do not hear is one of the oldest of experiences. How can you force the truth into Alfred Togg's so-called mind when he is fast asleep?"

Mrs. Ponder had an impulse to speak to her husband of Dolly and George Fotherly, but he was fatigued and sad, and she resolved to put off the subject till another time, and so they went silently into the house, which seemed cheerless because the two young people had left it, and then upstairs to bed and to sleep.

CHAPTER XI

THE SASSAFRAS PLANTATION

ON the next First-day morning George came to the grey house in the old fashion that he had followed before the Southerners appeared and brought trouble to him and to Abby, and invited her to go to meeting with him. She had wondered if he would come, and in her heart wished he would not. But she could not refuse to accompany him, and side by side they drove along the familiar road, both feeling troubled with memories of the youth and the girl who had so strangely come into their lives and then vanished. George, thinking of his love for Abby, felt that he had not been faithful to her, and was sore at heart with the reflection that his faithlessness to his religious profession barred him that day from the right to preach the gospel of purity and peace to his brethren. Abby had some little pangs of pity for the man whose love she had been compelled to refuse; but her mind was chiefly occupied by thoughts of Clayton. She had received several letters from him, and had written to him clandestinely more than once. She bore with her in her memory the passionate phrases of his letters, and in the silence of the meeting-house she found sweetness in them rather than in the worship of her Maker.

All the way along the road she recalled the walks she had had with Clayton. She remembered each place where they had stopped, and what he had said, and the very tones of his voice came back to

her. She talked with George and he with her, but with both there was an undercurrent of thought of the Marylanders, and when George had helped her from his carriage at the gate upon their return home, he drove away across the river feeling that the episode had been painful rather than pleasurable. He had the heartache as he reflected upon what those First-day morning drives had once been to him and to Abby, and how it had come to pass that the joy had gone from them. He doubted if he ought to ask Abby to go with him to meeting again, and yet he perceived that if he should change his practice in that respect there would be unpleasant talk that would grieve them both. He reached his home heavy laden with a feeling that all he had ever cared for had slipped from his grasp; that his love was lost, his religion was half gone, and that he was indeed the very chief of sinners.

He did not go to meeting on the next First-day, and he had warned Abby that he should not go; so she too remained at home, finding compensation in reading and re-reading behind the locked door of her chamber Clayton's letters old and new. Before another week had passed, Abby, yielding to Dolly's written entreaty, had gone away to Maryland.

The Harley plantation, Sassafras, lay upon the Sanaquan River, not far from Chesapeake Bay, on that great peninsula, containing the finer half of Maryland, which thrusts itself downward between the mighty bay and the ocean and is known as the Eastern Shore.

To Abby not less than to her mother the journey thither was formidable. The young Quakeress must go alone, making her first venture far from home without company of father or mother. And then the journey's ending was to be among people to whom the theories and practices of Friends were

unknown. World's people they were, and therefore companions of questionable value to an impressionable girl; slave-holders, also, and therefore approvers of a system against which Friends had borne strong and faithful testimony. Rachel Woolford had forebodings of the visit. To her it was like sending her girl into peril, and she inclined to regret that she had consented to Dolly's request. But Abby's joy at the prospect of going was so great, and Dolly's letters were pleading and insistent, and Mrs. Ponder was reassuring, and so Rachel, looking into the innocent face of her daughter and remembering the training she had had, considered that there might be, after all, small danger. George had doubts and fears of which he said nothing, and he could not venture to use his influence with the parents to cross Abby's desire; so he wished her happiness for her visit, and promised that he would help her to begin the journey.

He went with her one sunny afternoon to the little steamer that lay by the wharf in the Delaware, at Philadelphia, and found her cabin for her and cared for her baggage. Then, when the vessel drew into the stream, she responded to his gestures of farewell and to his pleasant smile, but indeed she had a pang of sorrow for him as she perceived, while the distance between them was increased, that part of the joy that thrilled her while she sped away was born of consciousness that to-morrow she should meet another man towards whom her soul even now went out in longing

It was of him she thought chiefly through the hours of the ending day while the boat hastened down the broad river, past Chester, then past New Castle between the lowlands that bank the stream. The voyage would have been dull but for these thoughts and for the expectant curiosity with

which she awaited that vision of the Southern plantation life of which she had heard so much.

Night had come when the boat floated into the lock at Delaware City, and Abby slept while the vessel, without perceptible motion, made its way through the canal. In the morning, when she came upon the deck, the steamer was in the Chesapeake, and Abby was filled with delight as she looked upon the great expanse of water, at the brilliant Eastern sky, and smelled the cool salt air that came up the bay from the southward.

Then the boat neared a wooded shore and turned a point into the mouth of a wide estuary, and some one said to her that this was the Sanaquan; not a river, though little streams pour into it from end to end, and when the tide has ebbed make the water almost sweet; but rather an arm of the Chesapeake, thrust far inland among the fertile fields and the great trees. Here it turns into a little bay where the tides make strong eddies, and there into a channel which the tributary brooks and rivulets have cut through the sandy soil in their striving to come within the pulse-beat of the ocean.

For the sea, two hundred miles away, sends its throb up the Sanaquan far among the plantations, and brings with it salt-water life where sea-breezes never blow, so that the planter who may pluck from his land the peaches and all the richest fruits, finds in the water oysters and fish and the other sea things that the dweller by the great fresh water rivers must go far to get. It is a region where land and water are filled with fatness for the eater, and where the fierceness of the summer sun, tempered by the nearness of the bay, is atoned for by the softness of winters that hardly know the bitter cold that is felt north of the Maryland line.

As the boat sped up the stream the shores came

nearer, and one after another, at wide intervals, on both sides of the river, Abby saw the great houses of the planters facing the water, with lawns sloping downward to the shore and with the white-washed cabins of the slaves clustered about them. She wondered which of them was Mr. Harley's, or if either of them was his; and then she looked about her at the woods, the green fields, the curious little branches of the stream that turned in here and there among the trees and ran off into bends and curves that seemed to hide their mysterious enchantment, at the glorious blue of the sky and the white splendour of the water about her, and she thought even the hills of Connock not more beautiful.

But a little while and the boat drew into a queer, old, dilapidated wooden pier, thrust out a few yards into the river, and the mate called aloud the name of the place where Abby must land. When she had gathered her journey things she looked again. Upon the wharf was a forlorn shed where freight was stored; there were boxes and baskets and other packages waiting for the boat to take them; six or eight white men stood by in expectation; black men and black boys in tatters lay about in the sun half indifferent to the coming of the boat; and there was a great double carriage and a woman waving her handkerchief and a man his hat. Her heart-beat quickened at the sight of the figure of the man. She knew that it was Clayton, and Dolly was with him, and the boat did not touch the corner of the wharf before Clayton leaped aboard and welcomed her.

When she was in the carriage, and Dolly and Clayton with beaming eyes, and with tongues that gave her small chance to say a word, showed their joy that she had come to them, the few misgivings she had had were gone. It seemed foolish to have

been doubting or distrustful, and her own warm heart could not help responding to the eager kindliness with which these Southern people greeted her. It was the common way in that region. The world has not known a more generous, fervent, considerate, full-souled hospitality; and when Abby thought of it afterward, in her communions with herself in her chamber in the Harley mansion, she believed it might be no better, but it did seem almost more charming, then the colder kindliness of her own dear people.

The road was rough and muddy, and the jolting of the carriage was severe as the negro driver guided the horses along the way that ran parallel with the river upon the bank nigh above it, but all the journey was full of laughter and of bright talk. Soon the carriage turned into a lane lined with Lombardy poplars, and then into a great wide grassy yard.

"That is our house," said Dolly.

It faced one of the broad inlets from the river, the north gable being turned toward the main stream whereon the boat had come. It was a long low building, white rough-cast, two stories high, with a steep roof, and having in front a portico with wooden cylindrical columns rising to the eaves. The Southron of those days always carried the Greek temple in his mind when he fashioned his house. It was large, roomy, speaking of comfort in every line of it; with yellow roses growing about it in thickets as they never will grow away from the southern sun, with all kinds of lovely flowers strewn here and there among the thick untrimmed grass; with the beauty of profusion and of carelessness.

Of carelessness there was evidence enough. No Northern man of good income would have had

the fences near his house half in wreck, or the subaltern buildings about his dwelling so full of strong appeal for repair. And no Northern man could have had the swarms of negroes who appeared on every hand. Negro men and boys sat upon the fence-tops and hailed the carriage as it came by, waving their hands and their head-coverings. Negro women with children in their arms, negro women without children, negro boys and girls from toddling infancy to vigorous youth were there with clothing enough half to hide their dark skins, with keen delight in the sunshine and the grass, and with strong curiosity to see the visitor.

They flocked about the carriage to greet her, but, when she was ready to descend, a stalwart turbanned mulatto woman from the house swept them aside with one thrust of her arm, and then Penelope appeared with the superior authority of an old acquaintance of Abby's and welcomed her as soon as Clayton had helped her to alight.

Father and Mother Harley were standing bareheaded under the portico with smiling faces, and when Mother Harley had embraced and kissed her, and Father Harley with high gracious courtesy had taken her hand, Dolly hurried Abby to her room and to Penelope to prepare for breakfast. Then Clayton, following father and mother into the house, flung himself upon a chair, and his father, glancing at him with an odd look, said to the mother:

"She far surpasses my expectations."

The Sassafras house was spacious and comfortable, but much wanting in those convenient arrangements which make life easier in modern houses. Upon one side of the hall there was a parlour, and behind that another and a smaller room also for the entertainment of guests. Across the hall was a living room, and beyond it a library

where the master had his office and his books. The back door of the library opened into a large dining-room filled with old mahogany furniture, and lighted by huge windows at either end. The kitchen was dissevered from the house, excepting that a covered way from one to the other was provided for shelter in bad weather.

In all the rooms were finely-carved mantels covering wide fireplaces; a few good pictures were upon the walls, and the furniture had been handsome. But there was shabbiness upon it and slovenliness upon everything. The wall-paper was dingy with the shadows of twenty years; the carpets long ago had lost the brightness from their colours; the stuffs that were upon the chairs and the sofa were faded and sometimes slit and torn; papers and magazines were piled in the corners upon the floor; the grey window blinds had many loose and dislocated slats, and the paint upon the woodwork was faded, while it had wholly disappeared from the places on the doors where the hands of the members of the household touched the doors to shut them.

Mrs. Harley had a passion for cleanliness, but she found herself reluctant to disturb the old familiar order of the hangings and the furniture, or to contend against the careless habits of the family with respect to the things that surrounded them. She liked to have life slip along easily and smoothly, and to prefer comfort for the body and absence of fretting from the soul, to niceness and fastidiousness for the satisfaction of the eye. Really, she was a good housekeeper, but she was overweighted by her servants. She had twenty black people in the dwelling, big and little, to do her bidding, and as many more outside eager to come in to lend a hand. But she found it hard to have a single task

done so well as it would have been done in Mrs. Ponder's house, or in Mrs. Woolford's, with one servant for all duties.

In truth, Mrs. Harley expended much the larger part of her energy in promoting the interests of her black dependents, for whom she did more than any dozen of them ever did for her. Every garment for the women and the children of the blacks in the house and upon the plantation was cut and made under her direction, and there was always sickness in the cabins calling for her help, and no call from that quarter ever came to her without bringing a quick and sympathetic response.

Slavery in the South, repulsive as it was as a total fact and in most of its details, was not without some beautiful features. In many cases the owners spent their lives in sacrifice and devotion to the blacks.

Porter Harley, Clayton's father, was a planter and an important man in his country. In his youth he had studied law without any purpose to practise it. Soon after his admission to the bar he had gone to Congress as a member of the Whig party, and as a follower and fond admirer of John M. Clayton, the Delaware statesman. He was a protectionist and an ardent disciple of Henry Clay. Having served two terms in the national House of Representatives, he refused to accept any other public office, but while retaining a keen interest in politics, and always doing a share of the campaign work in his State, he devoted himself to the management of his plantation, to his social duties and to desultory study.

When the secession movement began he regretted it, but considered that the South had had great provocation from the abolitionists of the North, and as the owner of more than a hundred slaves he could hardly help giving his sympathies

completely to the Southern slave-owners. He became a member of the Democratic party; he spoke always of the Southern seceders as "my people"; he regarded President Lincoln with scorn and anger, ashamed that a man who he thought had no claim to be regarded as a gentleman should hold the high office, and his wrath and his words were hot against Greeley, and Garrison and Phillips and the other prominent men of the North who denounced human slavery.

Harley was a man of some learning, of high bearing, and of forceful character. He knew everybody of importance in Washington he was influential in his own country, and he could have been rich if he had been less lavish in his methods of living and more careful in the management of his land. Baltimore was his market. There he sent, by the bay steamers, his tobacco and peaches and sweet potatoes and corn and wheat; there he bought his supplies, and there he had hundreds of acquaintances whom he visited, as they and their families visited him.

The Harleys were Episcopalians, and every Sunday they went to worship in a rude brick building, two hundred years old, standing miles away from any town in a grove of mighty oaks older than the church. Here, in an uncomfortable, unattractive room, with rough, unpainted pews, in each of which stood a spittoon, the planters were ministered to by a clergyman whose salary was much too small for his maintenance, even if it had not been always in arrears. He was kept alive, upon a pauper basis, by gifts of salt meat and garden-stuff from his wealthy parishioners, who had equipped him for the task of visiting the widely-scattered members of his flock by giving him a torpid horse and an ancient and battered carriage.

The glory of the parish was a weighty but unornamental communion service which had been given to the church by Queen Anne. If we can believe common report, that rather stupid but not unlovely sovereign must have expended no small part of her income in scattering silver communion vessels up and down the Maryland and Delaware peninsula among the churches.

The Harleys were almost as stiff church people as Mrs. Harley's sister, Mrs. Ponder; but Abby, disposed though she was to extreme charitableness, could not avoid the reflection that intense enthusiasm for the church and its services appeared to be consistent with complete absence of the spiritual uplift which she was familiar with among the Quakers.

When Abby had made herself ready for the late breakfast, Dolly met her at the foot of the staircase, and together they went into the library, where the white and black members of the household were assembled for family prayer. At one end of the room sat Mrs. Harley and Dolly, who were joined by Clayton after Abby had appeared. At the other end of the room stood twenty or more negroes, most of them women and girls. They were huddled together in the corners and by the doors, and they whispered and grinned while the master entered and took his seat in the great armchair by the library table.

When he had found the places in the prayer-book, he inserted his thumb and a finger among the leaves and looked at the coloured worshippers.

"Emeline!" he said, "addressing one of them, "stop grinning and look sober. This is not a merry-making. Tilly! keep your hands and your toes still. Letitia! how many times have I told you not to come to prayers without a handkerchief

about your head? Joe! stand over there by the bookcase, where you will be by yourself, and learn how to benave when you come into this room."

Then, looking over the whole group again to see that there was perfect order, Mr. Harley began to read part of the psalter for the day in precisely the same tone he had used in scolding his slaves. Then the white people kneeled down, the blacks still standing, and without change of tone Mr. Harley read a part of "the order for Morning Prayer to be used in families."

The final Amen having been said, he arose, and turning to the black folks he said, just as if he were still presenting prayer:

"Penelope! if you whisper ag .n during worship I will have you trounced!"

"You see, my dear," said Mrs. Harley, as the white people moved towards the dining-room, "that we not only care for the bodies, but for the souls of these black folks. I say souls, for they *have* souls, I suppose; a kind of souls, we might perhaps call them; rudimentary souls, it may be; or, if we accept, as I think we must, the theory of the descent from Ham, and consequently from Noah, we might rather say deteriorated souls—souls that have shrivelled and shrunk until they are hardly souls at all. Have you noticed the negro heel? Why, my dear, it is projecting, it protrudes, and the protruding heel is always the sign and token of the presence of the lower nature."

Mrs. Harley reminded Abby strongly of Mrs. Ponder.

When the family was seated at the table, and the blessing had been asked by Mr. Harley, Mrs. Harley, with her hand on the spigot of the coffee-urn, and while she dispensed the coffee, continued to give Abby information about the black people.

"The truth is, my child, that the life of the African upon one of our plantations is idyllic. There is no real enslavement, as Northern people think. The negroes are held in silken bonds to a happy pastoral life nearly all of which is sunshine. When you consider that according to the testimony of the Scriptures they are under a curse, it is perhaps not entirely right to treat them so well; but we can hardly be expected, I suppose, to suppress the better impulses of our nature; and so, in spite of the guilt of their unnatural ancestor, we, having culled them from barbarism, plant them in the midst of our high civilization and lavish kindness upon them. They return it with affection. Offer to any of our negroes freedom, and they would scorn it and all its obligations and hardships."

To Abby these were new aspects of the slavery question, and they interested her even if Mrs. Harley's theories could not have prompt acceptance from her mind.

In the dining-room the Quakeress was introduced to another guest, Dr. Ramsay, concerning whose relations with the family she was long in doubt. They called him "Cousin Tom," and Dolly hinted that he was a distant cousin of her mother's.

Cousin Tom appeared to make a point of never appearing at family prayers.

The table was supplied by a quantity and variety of food such as the Quaker girl had never before known as material for a single meal. There were six kinds of hot bread, including corn-pone and Maryland biscuits, and besides ham and beefsteaks and eggs in several attractive forms, there were fried and stewed oysters and white perch, with four or five fresh fruits, and for drinks, coffee, tea, cocoa, and milk. Abby guessed that her family at home

could have lived comfortably for a week upon the breakfast spread before the Harleys.

There were three negress waiters to care for the guests, and with these servants four negro girls, wearing loose slips of blue denim and with bare feet, walked about the table driving away flies with huge fans made from peacock tails.

The meal had but begun when a negro man came into the room and whispered to the master that the "boys" in the harvest field (meaning the workmen) had no whiskey; whereupon Mr. Harley, with the air of a man who had been discovered in a fault, rose quickly from his chair, unlocked the sideboard, and handed a demijohn to the black man. Abby had indeed come into a strange country for a member of Plymouth Meeting.

For her there were many questions about her journey, and many more about Mrs. Ponder and the doctor, and then the talk turned upon the pleasures that were in store for her upon the Sassafras plantation and in the region round about. It was hard to keep slavery out of the conversation, but harder still for the Harleys to restrain their talk about the war, the one theme that engaged the attention of everybody at that time. The Harleys were jubilant over the Battle of Bull Run, fought in July, and they entertained no doubt of victory for the Confederates in every battle yet to come. They did not say so plainly to the Quakeress, but no attempt was made to disguise the fact that in the county in which Sassafras stood, bands of young men were riding about menacing anti-slavery men with destruction of their property unless they should move away. Tolerance was not the practice in any part of the South before the war began, and now, with passion highly inflamed by the conflict, the pro-slavery people in the slave

States remaining in the Union would not suffer any man to live in peace unless in his secret thought he gave approval to human slavery.

The beliefs, the practices, the bitterness, the sentiments of these Southern people were so different from anything the Quakeress had ever encountered that she felt as if the Harleys belonged to another race than hers and breathed a strange atmosphere. With her narrow experience of life, confined to social conditions in which opinion was untrammelled, in which human liberty was sacred and precious, and in which violence of speech and action were wholly unknown to respectable people, the social order that permitted a man's beliefs to become an excuse for plundering his home, maiming his body and forcing him into exile seemed shocking when she considered it.

But she did not consider it very closely. The host and the hostess tried to repress all that they guessed would be unpleasant for her, and they treated her with affectionate courtesy so persistent and gracious that she could not help admiring and loving them.

The breakfast was prolonged far into the morning. Nobody at Sassafras was ever in a hurry. Nobody but Mrs. Harley and some of the black people had anything to do, and even their tasks might be done leisurely. It was nearly eleven o'clock before the family left the dining-room. Lunch was announced for one o'clock, but Abby felt that she should not wish for food again until very late in the day. She went with the other folks into the library, whence, presently, Clayton took her out to show her the house, upstairs and downstairs, and to find an opportunity to speak with her alone a word of welcome and of delight.

Then with Dolly and Dr. Ramsay, they walked

over the lovely lawn that sloped downward to the water a hundred yards from the house until they came to a boat-house and a pier that pushed itself out upon the stream. A dozen tattered black boys and girls followed them, and behind them walked Clayton's body servant, Joe, and another well-grown coloured boy. These proceeded to bring out the boat and to hoist the sail, and when the four white people had placed themselves comfortably in the vessel, the two negroes, one at the bow and the other at the tiller, undertook to manage it.

The breeze was fair, the sky was unclouded, and Abby was filled with delight as the little craft rushed out from the inlet to the wider river, and then, taking in reverse the route over which she had come in the morning in the steamer, plunged forward toward the great bay, and out among the white caps that foamed upon its surface.

It was the first experience of the Connock lass in a sail boat, and with no qualms of sea-sickness affecting her, she found herself rejoicing as the boat raised itself before the advancing waves, and then, dipping its prow, forced itself merrily through them.

It was a large part of her pleasure that Clayton sat beside her and talked with her about herself, and about the scenery and the sailing, and told her of the fine times she should have with them while she tarried at Sassafras. She was much absorbed by Clayton and by the voyage, but not so completely as to fail to observe that Dolly and Dr. Ramsay were finding much satisfaction in each other's company. Before Abby had been many days at Sassafras she had made up her mind that the doctor intended to make Dolly his wife.

When the boat had raced down the bay for an

hour Clayton ordered that it should be put about, and presently it neared the shore at a point where a low promontory rose from the water, and here, at Parker's Bluff, as it was called, the boat ran into a cove where was a sandy beach, and Clayton and Abby got out. Dolly and the doctor remained in the craft, which turned and began to tack upon the homeward route.

Clayton and his companion climbed to the summit of the bluff and watched the little vessel as it moved to and fro upon the water.

The place to which they had come was beautiful, and if Abby could not have remembered it because of this visit in company with Clayton, she would still have had an indelible impression of its features printed upon her mind by an incident which should bring her there again under tragic circumstances.

Now, when she looked about her, she saw a wide expanse of greensward, with here and there a great tree rising from it, while further inland a wood having a nearly impossible tangle of undergrowth stretched between the grassy plateau and the road that led to Sassafras on the one hand, and to the county town on the other.

"This is a famous picnic ground," said Clayton, as he turned away from the river with Abby, "and we will have a picnic here some day while you are with us. But now let us stroll homeward."

They walked together slowly upon the grass by the edge of the bluff that pushed itself out into the wind-swept water; and thence by a path through the thicket in the wood, coming out upon a sandy road traversing the flat country, and bordered by hedges beneath which the grass was starred with wild flowers. Here and there through the clumps of trees at intervals were glimpses of the bay and then of the river and the inlet that fronted Sassafras

The talk of the man and the woman, from the beginning of the walk, was of themselves.

"I longed for you to come to our home in response to Dolly's invitation," said Clayton, "but I hardly dared hope for it."

"Thee knows well how eager I was to visit thy parents and thy sister and thee; but thee also knows—thee and I alone know—that I had no right to come here."

"I have no such knowledge!" said Clayton, strongly. "It is absolutely right for you to be with us."

"Then why," asked Abby, "did thee not dare to hope that I would come?"

"I feared you would think it wrong when it is not wrong; that you would consider the unhappy conditions of which I am the innocent victim a sufficient reason for not seeing me. It would be cruel and unjust to have it so. You have been most generous and kind to me in disregarding them."

"But, Clayton, we cannot disregard them. That thee has a wife is a fact that bars me from thee no matter what we think about it."

"It will not do so always."

"Yes," said Abby, "it will."

"You love me dearly still, I know," said Clayton. "It is the only joy of my life to be sure of that."

"I cannot help it," murmured Abby with her eyes downcast; "but it is an offence against God."

"No!" exclaimed Clayton. "It is God's own gift to both of us. There can be no true marriage without true love. I have none for that horrid woman; I never had any; I was, as I told you, ensnared. You are the first woman I ever loved, and that love you completely return. It is divine and holy; you are in the highest and best sense my wife now—my celestial wife."

Abby did not think, she could not even have guessed, how many times that proposition, reeking with evil, had been presented by reckless lovers; but it brought no illusion to her. She answered simply:

"I am not thy wife. I will never be thy wife."

"Why, Abby!" said Clayton with a bit of fear in his heart, and looking at her with open eyes. "You must not say such things as that. If we live and you love me always, our marriage is certain; and we are both very young."

"I fear I shall love thee to the very end," said Abby, "but——"

"You don't fear it?"

"Yes, I fear it, and because I know that, whether life be long or short, there will be no peace for me, because 'there is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked,' and we are wicked when we talk of love while thee owes to thy wife all that thee has."

"I owe her nothing but hatred and disgust! I am compelled to acknowledge the bond, but it is slavery. It will be broken some day, and then we shall find peace."

"I say to thee, dear Clayton, that thee deceives thyself. I will never marry thee."

"Nonsense, Abby! Why do you speak in that positive way? It is most unreasonable."

"Clayton, does thee remember—I know it is foolish to dwell upon a matter that seems so idle—does thee remember the gipsy woman who pretended to tell thy fortune and mine one day at Spring Mill?"

"It is not possible, Abby dear, that you attach any importance to what that vagabond creature said? What did she say to you?"

Abby hesitated for a moment. Then, as if it were very hard to speak the words:

"That I should die from a broken heart."

Clayton laughed, but not with his usual heartiness. "How can you dwell upon that woman's words, my dear girl? It is impossible that you can believe Heaven has given to such a wretch the gift of prophecy!"

"Yes, but Clayton, I have the prophecy in my own soul. When she said it, I felt that she was speaking the truth, even while no one could have less faith than I have in her power to read the future. I know not how she could make such a guess, but I can perceive plainly how the prediction may be fulfilled."

"You mean," said Clayton solemnly, for he recalled the words the woman had said to him, "that such anguish will come to you through me?"

"Alas, dear Clayton," she answered sadly, "has it not already come? What is strong love but bitter pain when separation is the only possibility?"

"Come, dearest, let us look more cheerfully at the matter," said Clayton; and he took her hand, and would have put his arm about her to embrace and kiss her But she restrained him.

"I think thee must not do that any more, dear Clayton. Forgive me for saying that to thee. The touch of thy hand is precious to me, but I will sin more deeply if with the love I should not take from thee I accept the caress thee cannot rightly give me."

"I will respect your wish," he said mournfully; "but at least I may hold your hand while we walk homeward, and no one is near."

She did not resist him, and so, without many more words, they came at last to the end of the lane that ran from the high road to Mr. Harley's house.

CHAPTER XII

DAYS AT SASSAFRAS

THE young people from the neighbouring plantations came in large numbers to call upon Dolly's guest during the next few days. The girls and the men were always on horseback, and Abby, who had never learned to ride, marvelled at the grace and ease with which the girls managed their spirited horses. She thought all the girls charming, and many of them were beautiful. They were so warm and frank and cheery in their manner toward her that she could not help liking them very much, although they were so different from any girls she had ever known; and for their part, if they had not been impelled to look upon her with favour because she was Dolly's friend, her fair countenance, soft sweet voice and modest quiet manner, not less than the quaintness of her grey dress with the white handkerchief crossed upon her breast, would have won them instantly.

The visitors talked so much and so rapidly that Abby had little chance to try her power as an entertainer, and the talk was nearly always conducted with skilful avoidance of dangerous topics. But chattering girls whose minds are tense with interest in a single subject cannot always guide their tongues away from it, and so Abby was not long in learning that every one of her girl-visitors was a Secessionist whose enthusiasm for the Southern cause was only surpassed in intensity by the fury of her hatred of

the North and the abolitionists. The young men were bitter in their feeling against "the invaders," as the Northern armies were called, but the malignancy and venom of the women much surpassed those of the men. But the Quaker girl knew how to maintain silence when there was likely to be strife of tongues, and if she had a disposition to feel uncomfortable among these people whose principles were hostile to her own serious beliefs, it was completely smothered by the kindness poured out upon her by the Harleys and their friends. And then, Clayton was always near to her. That would fully compensate for all that was distasteful to her, and even while her conscience troubled her at the thought of her love for him, she exulted in that love and found in his company an intensity of sweetness which, for some strange reason, forbidden things commonly have.

All sorts of invitations were given to her by the visitors, and many pleasures were devised for her by her hosts, and she was not unwilling to taste the delights thus presented to her so far as she could conveniently do so.

Before she went to see any of the near plantations the Harleys wished that she should examine their own. So one morning she went with Mrs. Harley and Clayton and Dolly to the negro quarters, where each cabin was visited. Mrs. Harley seemed particularly anxious that Abby should believe the negroes perfectly happy and contented, and the owners of them devoted to the promotion of their temporal and spiritual welfare; and Abby was forced to confess that the little homes were fairly equal to the requirements of humble people, and that the blacks showed no sign of discontent.

"Put yourself in the negro's place," said Mrs. Harley to the Quaker girl, as they walked back to

the great house. "Which would you prefer: to be a repulsive savage, with little or no clothing, bounding about in your native forests like the beasts that perish, and with depraved barbarians all around you ready at any moment to catch you and eat you, or one of our slaves, living in comfort and plenty under a kind master? Is it any wonder these people are satisfied? Why, my dear, surely when they remember the horrors of the dark continent the sweet serenity of Sassafras must seem like dreamland."

Abby admitted that this view of the matter was not wholly unreasonable.

"The slave system," continued Mrs. Harley, "is simply a return to patriarchal methods. The defenceless black leans on the strong arm of the white. The benighted savage is brought where the light may shine upon him. The heathen in his blindness, bowing down to wood and stone, comes under the beneficent influence of religion and family prayers. Rightly considered, Mr. Harley is a patriarch. His very presence among these poor creatures is a joy and a benediction."

Still, Abby felt sure there was another side to the picture, and it was revealed to her unexpectedly. On the next morning early she happened to look from her chamber window, and out by the carriage house, a hundred yards away, she saw Mr. Harley with a black-snake whip flogging a gigantic negro, who clenched his hands and restrained his tongue while the blows fell upon him.

Abby turned away half sick and covered her face with her hands. She felt a wave of wrath sweep in upon her, and suddenly Sassafras and everything about it became repulsive. Before she had fully recovered from the shock of this spectacle Penelope knocked upon her door and came in to

wait upon her while she dressed. Abby resolved to say nothing to the girl about the flogging, but Penelope was visibly agitated about something, and guessing where the sympathies of the Quakeress were, she said :

"Miss Abby, ef you'd 'a' looked outen yer window jes' now, you could a seen sumpin'."

"I did see it, Penny," said Abby quietly. "Who was the man ? "

"'Twas ole Uncle Billy, Missy, de bes' nigger Mars Po'tah got."

"Why was he punished ? "

"De laws knows, Miss Abby. Sassin' de overseer or sumpin' o' dat kind. But it doan mek no difference. Mars Po'tah been long mad agin Billy, an' he beat him, jes' for nuffin', soon as not."

"The black people are not unhappy here, though, Penelope ? "

"Missy, we'se got to be mighty keerful what we say, but I kin trus' you, for I knows dat all de Friends favours de black folks. Mars Po'tah treats dem fair enough most times, and Miss Harley she jes' as kind ez she kin be. But all de niggers knows about Mars Linkum an' de war agin' de slaveholders, and dey's a hopin' to be free. Dat jes' stands to reason, Missy, doan it ? Ef dey know how to do it, every grown nigger on dis yer plantation would git away to-night."

"Not you, Penny ? "

"Yes 'm'. I want to go, and I'm a gwine de very fus' chance. You min' dat, Miss Abby, and I'd like to go when you go ; but you're not sayin' nothin' ? Billy 'll not be yer to-morrow ef I knows him. Mars Po'tah done lash him once too often. He'd a quit long ago, but for his wife an' chilluns."

Sure enough, when Abby on the next morning

came down to breakfast there was gloom upon the faces of the white members of the household, and Abby did not have to ask the reason why. In her chamber Penny had told her that Billy, under cover of the darkness, had left his wife and children and fled northward to liberty.

When family prayer was said Mr. Harley seemed feverish and hurried. Abby thought he might as well have omitted that lovely petition that we may be "quiet and peaceable, full of compassion and ready to do good to all men"; but Mr. Harley's mind may not have been upon the words.

At the table no reference was made to the disappearance of Billy, but Mr. Harley found expression for his feelings in the declaration, made with intense earnestness while he dismembered the fried chicken:

"I wish from the bottom of my heart there was not an infernal nigger, slave or free, upon this continent!"

When all was well with his slaves and Mr. Harley was in a good humour, he spoke of them as "my faithful blacks"; when they gave him trouble he alluded to them as "those infernal niggers!"

Just now he was weary of the race and of the difficulties in which it involved him and the nation, and multitudes of slave-owners felt as he did.

Will the Americans of the future understand the situation in which these people were placed? The Southern men of the last century did not create slavery. It came to them as an unwelcome inheritance. Many of them gave it no sincere approval. But vast capital was invested in slaves, capital not to be recovered by any method of emancipation that was really practicable. Perhaps it was too much to ask that this investment should be simply annihilated. The labour of the slaves was needed.

To withdraw it within any brief period would have been to paralyze Southern industry and to destroy the productive power of the South. The value of the plantations would have been reduced to ruinous figures by quick emancipation; and then the question, What is to become of the freed blacks? was not easy to answer. It has not had, even yet, a satisfactory answer.

Pressure from the North, carrying with it an assumption of superior virtue upon the part of the Northern men, came upon Southerners whose consciences were already troubled by slavery and who were entangled in the economical and other difficulties surrounding the matter, and it was resented. Really, upon the whole, the wise and humane men among the Southerners did their best with a situation of extraordinary perplexity for which they were not responsible, and the fierce assaults of the abolitionists not only exasperated them, but impelled them to stand together for organized resistance.

Before Abby had been at Sassafras for many days, Mrs. Harley arranged to have in her honour a garden-party. The first intention was to provide a picnic and to hold it at Parker's Bluff; but after much discussion the Harleys decided that the entertainment could be more comfortably and conveniently offered upon their own place and that the compliment to their guest would be greater.

Provision was made for sailing upon the inlet, for fishing for the white perch with which those waters are filled; for croquet and tennis and other games, and for dancing upon the lawn. The music was to be supplied by two of Mr. Harley's negroes, famous fiddlers, and a banjo player of much repute from the Morris plantation.

"The negro," said Mrs. Harley to Abby, "has

a remarkable gift for music. It is, I believe, a reminiscence of the lost glory of the race—lost by the unfilial and scandalous conduct of Ham. But even this gift would have been undeveloped and unknown had the blacks remained in Africa. They say the natives of that continent simply screech and beat on tom-toms—whatever they are. Contact with the whites revealed the latent musical power which had been smothered for centuries."

In the early afternoon the visitors came in scores on horseback, and soon the wide lawn was thronged by young men and women in holiday dress, and the stream that flowed by the foot of the lawn bore a dozen boats sailing and rowing to and fro.

All the games were going and the company was scattered about among the trees and over the grass before the musicians came, and taking place beneath a great chestnut began the twanging and thrumming of their instrument in preparation for the dance. About the skill of the players in producing dance-music there could be no doubt at all, when once they began their task, nor was it less evident that they were earnest and enthusiastic in the performance. They played with vigour while their bodies swayed to and fro, and the older fiddler seemed in a sort of ecastacy as he called the figures of the cotillions and the reels, while the dancers whirled about upon the sward.

With Clayton near to her, Abby, sitting beneath the shade of a chestnut tree, watched the dancers with interest, and perhaps not without a little feeling of regret that she could not join them. More than once she was invited by the young men to do so, but always she was compelled to shake her head, and with a smile to say:

"I am very, very sorry, but indeed I do not know how to dance."

"Dolly and I will teach you," said Clayton when she first professed her ignorance; but Abby replied that she could not venture to depart so far from the approved practice and sound principles of Friends.

But indeed there was pleasure enough for her in watching the movements of the visitors, in listening to the bright talk and happy laughter all about her, and in receiving the greetings of the folks whom she already knew or who for the first time were introduced to her. She could not doubt that she was much liked for herself, as well as because she was a stranger who had come to the house of popular people, for there was the heartiness of sincerity in every word spoken to her. Clayton could have told her, if he had wished, that everybody present thought her grace and beauty wonderful, and her simple pretty costume the most becoming of all the dresses worn at the party.

The young men were as attentive to her as they could be, but with them she was shy. She could not dance, nor would she go upon the river, and she puzzled them not a little with her very quiet manner and her Quaker speech.

Carrol Thorn, the son of a planter over near to Georgetown, found her fascinating, and he had not talked with her long before he determined that he was more than half in love with her.

Thorn was a tall, thin young man, with reddish hair, and with a hard face, not unhandsome, but suggestive of fast living. His family was rich and he was the heir; always he had had his own way; and if he fancied a girl like Abby, it was impossible that he should be baulked either by her demure shy bearing or by the manifest purpose of Clayton to admit no rivals to the field but to keep the girl closely to himself.

Thus Thorn, who was a gentleman, a man of

cultivation, and used to the best social things, addressed himself earnestly to the task of making a good impression upon the Quakeress. She regarded him at first with mild disfavour; but the graciousness of his manner and his high speech enabled him largely to overcome this feeling; and soon Abby accepted his invitation to walk with him to the water's edge.

She was more willing to go with him because she perceived the necessity that she should not appear to permit Clayton to have any special claim upon her. But that claim he thought he had, and he was guilty of the folly, not unusual with lovers, of cherishing feelings of anger towards her and towards the man who bestowed upon her the courtesy of his attention. He actually sulked and felt incapable of playing his part as one of the givers of the feast, while he watched Thorn and Abby strolling across the lawn toward the river.

Thorn was eager and impetuous in his talk with the girl, and there was a touch of roughness and peremptoriness in his speech which was not in tune with her gentle nature. But upon the whole she liked him more than she thought she would have done, and he, believing that he was gaining ground with her, strove with all the power he had to commend himself to her approval.

They sat upon the grass on the bank that dropped off to the verge of the river, and he talked to her vivaciously about everything that he thought would interest her. Particularly did he wish to know of Friends and their ideas, beliefs and methods, and so there was a strong temptation for Abby to talk and to tell him of things she loved.

They were in the midst of a conversation delightful for him and not displeasing to her, when Thorn, turning his head, saw Clayton near by, but just

distant enough to avoid the reproach that he was seeking Abby.

Thorn pretended not to see him, but, rising, he gave his hand to Abby to lift her to her feet, and slowly they walked back to the groups that were gathered upon the upper lawn. When Thorn had surrendered Abby to Mrs. Harley, he turned and went toward the river, meeting Clayton on the way. Thorn stopped him and said to him sharply:

"It was not worth while to follow me up, as if I were going to run away with her."

"We shall not make her a subject of discussion, please."

"No!" responded Thorn, "and yet it might be of advantage to her if I should have some discussion with her."

"How is that?"

"Does she know you are already married?"

"What she knows or does not know is no concern of yours, nor yet is it your privilege to meddle with me."

"It may be a duty rather than a privilege," said Thorn, with a black look upon his face.

But Clayton, making no response, turned upon his heel and crossed the sward to be where Abby was.

Dr. Ramsay was a conspicuous figure among the people on the lawn, but Abby noted that he was not specially attentive to Dolly. He danced with her once, but he was partner for half a dozen girls in succession, and he neither walked nor talked with Dolly during the remainder of the day. Abby began to believe that she had been mistaken in supposing that the doctor and Dolly were interested in each other.

Late in the afternoon, when she was somewhat weary of the gaiety and excitement of the party, she went alone over to the garden at the side of the

lawn and entered it, thinking she would rest for a little while within the enclosure.

The garden had all about it a high hedge of mock-orange, and around each of the great flower-beds was a border of box-wood, dense and grown higher than Abby's head. She found in one of the gravelled walks a rustic seat upon which she placed herself, intending to return speedily to the lawn and to the throng of men and women whose voices came to her in a confused babel across the hedge.

But no sooner had she taken her seat than she became aware that other persons were near to her upon the other side of the box-wood bushes, and before she had time to think what she ought to do, she recognized the voices of Dr. Ramsay and of Dolly. He was speaking passionately to her, and she, responding in broken sentences, seemed to be not at all reluctant to accept his protestations.

Abby was ashamed to hear them, and quickly arose and moved away as quietly as possible with a purpose to conceal her presence. She could have no doubt now, at any rate, of the doctor's sentiment for Dolly; and despite her genuine regret that she had unintentionally been a listener, she smiled as she walked over to the garden gate at the discovery she had made. She knew little or nothing of Dr. Ramsay, but it seemed a pleasant thing that Dolly should have had awakened in her soul that passion which had brought such bliss to Abby, even if sorrow had come with it.

Later in the day, when all the company had gone, Abby walked with Clayton down to the pier that jutted out upon the river by the boat-house, and while the twilight began to fall and the shadows of the evening lay upon the still grey water before them, they talked of the party and the people and of the promise of pleasure that was in store for them still, before Abby should return to Connock.

"Mrs. Morris has asked us to an evening party at her house for Thursday," said Clayton.

"Yes," responded the girl. "She invited me and strongly urged me to come."

"And you will go?"

"It would be ungracious not to go, wouldn't it? And yet I am not used to parties, and I know they will dance all the time, and I cannot dance."

"But you will have to go," said Clayton, "and Dolly and I will take care of the rest of it."

"I will consider it," said Abby, who knew she should decide to attend the ball, although she shrank a little from the thought of it, when she remembered Connock and her father and mother and the meeting and George.

She put aside the matter now, and thinking of what she had heard in the garden, she said:

"Clayton, I wish to ask thee something. Who is Doctor Ramsay?"

"Ramsay? He is a cousin of my mother's: a second or third cousin, or something of that kind, I believe. I never understood very well the relationship of the family a generation or so back. Why do you inquire about him?"

"Mere idle curiosity. I find him here with thy family, and I could not quite understand his position."

"His home is in Baltimore, where he has made some sort of a pretence at practising medicine; but he is rich and need not do more than he likes in that direction. He comes here to stay with us a good deal, and we find him an agreeable addition to the household."

"I thought——" said Abby, and then stopped.

"What did you think, my dear?"

Abby laughed lightly and said: "Well, I had an idea that he cared for thy sister. Pardon me for saying that. I have no right to say it."

Clayton was amused.

"My dear," he answered, "your ideas have led you far away from the fact. Why, Abby, Dr. Ramsay has a wife and two children. I did not intend to tell you that, for he has separated from them. I don't know much about it. Some kind of a squabble, or incompatibility, or a money-fuss. They couldn't agree, anyhow, and so Ramsay turned over house and home to her and cash for maintenance, while he roams about, coming here occasionally and making journeys to the North. He never had a thought of Dolly nor she of him. Dolly! Why, my dear, I wouldn't stand that kind of thing for a minute! And do you think she——?"

Clayton had a vibration of anger in his voice as he abruptly stopped speaking. Abby was looking up at him. He turned his eyes to hers. She stayed silent, but the crimson flushes mounted to her cheeks and to her forehead and the hot blood poured upon her brain until she thought she should swoon.

Clayton's face was red also, and he held his tongue; but he clenched his hands until the nails almost pierced the palms, and silently cursed himself that he had not been more prudent in his speech.

For a few moments they looked out upon the water now glimmering white in the dusk, and then Abby arose and said: "Let us go to the house."

She took her companion's arm as they walked from the pier to the lawn, and then over the grass to the house.

Clayton tried to turn her thoughts away from Dr. Ramsay and Dolly by speaking of the Morris ball and of the pleasures of the day that was just now ended; but Abby had fallen silent; and almos as soon as she reached the house, she went to her room and to bed.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE WORLD'S PEOPLE

ABBY had half-resolved not to go to Mrs. Morris's ball. She was worried by the strange suspicion that had been awakened in her mind about Dolly, and then she shrank from proceeding much farther along the way that led her far from the teachings and practices of Friends.

But Clayton reassured her concerning his sister, and she began to believe that really she might have misunderstood the talk she had overheard in the garden. Dr. Ramsay had gone away for a time, and Dolly's demeanour surely gave no indication that she had any serious thought for him or for any other person

And then the Quakeress could hardly escape the influence of the excitement attending Dolly's preparations for the ball, whilst always in her mind was the thought that if she went to the Morris plantation on that night Clayton would be her close companion.

"There can be no possible harm in it, dear," urged Dolly. "The best people in the neighbourhood, lots of them religious people, will be there, and Mrs. Morris is a model of a woman; a church member, too. You should have a chance to see a little of the world, Abby. It is not very wicked. A ball like this is merely a pleasant gathering of friends. Go just once and meet them, and never go again if you find the meeting not to your fancy."

"But the dancing!" said Abby, "and my

plain clothing! I cannot dance, and I should be queer among those gaily dressed people."

Dolly became more urgent as she saw Abby's resolution, weakening, and so she produced a beautiful dress which Abby was persuaded to try on; and then, putting her arm about the Quaker girl, Dolly insisted that she should learn the steps of the waltz whilst Dolly hummed a tune.

Soon the two were whirling about the room, and when they stopped, Abby looked at herself in the mirror and saw there a face and a figure made strangely handsome by the bright attire.

Then Clayton came in, and his words of praise of her appearance were less to her than the admiration plainly depicted on his face.

His repeated earnest entreaty that she should go to the ball, and with him, removed the last remnant of her reluctance, and so, many times again that day and the next, she practised the steps of the dance with Dolly, while Penelope's skilled fingers touched here and there with bits of lace and ribbon the dress that Abby was to wear.

Amid all these delightful preparations there was no time for compunction, nor when on the evening of the ball Clayton wrapped a cloak about her and led her out to the wagon which he would drive with his own hands to the Morris plantation. A negro on horseback followed to care for the horse when the plantation should be reached.

Then when Abby had placed herself in the carriage with Clayton beside her, they drove slowly down the gravelled way among the shadows of the evergreens that the early moonlight threw across the path, and so came out upon the road that ran beneath the great trees by the river bank.

A strange joy was in the heart of the girl. The joy to be alone with Clayton was stronger than

ever before, and with it was mingled the pleasure of high expectation. For all this coming experience had the thrill and the charm of novelty. She had found that she loved to dance, and now she was to dance with this man, and to hearken to rapturous music, to see strange faces, and to wear for the first time in public garments that appealed to her senses almost as music did.

The night was lovely, and the scene about them, softened and made mystical by the uncertain light, seemed more beautiful than ever. If she had found in her mind an impulse to regret that she had departed from the principles of her people, she could have had no chance to cherish it, for Clayton was in high spirits and he talked constantly to her with mingled humour and tenderness, and both of them found frequent provocation to hearty laughter. When the Morris house was reached Abby wondered at the shortness of the journey.

Dolly, who had come with her father, met the Quakeress at the very entrance of the broad hallway, and together they went to the great chamber overhead where negro maids were ready to take their wraps. Then Dolly turned to adjust her friend's dress and to put a fresh flower in her hair, after which she presented her to three or four women whom Abby thought very beautiful.

Abby went down the stairs and into the wide drawing-room, leaning upon Clayton's arm, and Clayton did not even try to hide the exultation with which he led this sweet stranger in among the throngs of his friends. The girl could not but be conscious that she had strong attention from the company, for all the women came to greet her with warm Southern graciousness and the young men were eager to know her.

"I will dance with none but thee," she whispered to Clayton, when the music softly began.

"The others may think that ungenerous," said Clayton, not displeased.

"They must not," she said. "I dance so poorly that I should be ashamed, and then—then—I am half afraid it is not right for me to dance at all."

"Come," he said, "you must put that by. Some of these women who will dance are really angels of goodness. There can be no harm. But you shall do as you like, only you must dance with me, will you not?"

"Yes, but once or twice, and thee will say to them, will thee not, if they think me unkind, that I have never danced before?"

"Yes, you shall not dance with them if you do not wish. I will explain. And now, there is a waltz. Will you come?"

She had ever been exquisitely sensitive to sweet music—and now, with the arms of the man she loved about her, with her face near to his, with the stronger heart-beats compelled by the swift movement, with the mirrored lights, the perfumed air, the gay colours, the whirling forms about her, that music seemed to her so rapturously beautiful that her eyes became misty and her soul was lifted into perfect ecstasy. This, then, is why people love to dance! No wonder! She felt in that moment as if never before had she known pure bliss, and whether it were merely sensuous or something loftier and better she could not care or think. She gave herself up to it, and forgot everything but herself and her partner; and when the music stopped and with cheeks reddened into brilliancy of beauty the two walked into the hallway, she found herself clinging to Clayton's arm as if he were a part of her. She was almost unable to articulate.

"I knew you would like the dance," he said, for he did not need to ask her if she liked it.

She looked up at him with tenderness in her eyes, and said: "I did not dream it was so lovely."

"And we will dance again," said Clayton; "but now we will walk upon the porch for awhile."

So he threw a wrap about her, and out they went upon the wide piazza upheld by great white columns. Others were there in the cool air and the moonlight, but these two walked far up to the end where the river could be seen, with the white light shining upon it, and there they stood, and both for a time were silent.

Through the open window came to them the sound of voices in lively conversation and now and then of merriment, and presently the music began again, and, as the dancers thronged the floor, the clatter of tongues was half-muffled.

"Once I cared for that revelry," said Clayton. "I cared for it for itself; but now it would be nothing to me if you were not here."

She clasped his arm more closely.

"It is pure joy for me to be here," said Abby, softly.

"With me?"

"I cannot tell: the music, the people, the stir of the dance—all give me strange pleasure; but perhaps—perhaps it is because you are with me."

Then he waved his hand towards the landscape half revealed by the moonlight, and said:

"And that is better, with its sweetness and quiet and solitude, than the noise and the heat and the crowd of the ball-room. It is better for lovers, at any rate."

"But we must not stay here," said Abby, "delightful as it is."

"No, we will go in and dance again."

When Clayton had danced with her once more, other young men claimed her as a partner and were

urgent for her acceptance, but she thought she must refuse, and Mrs. Morris graciously came to her aid in giving to the disappointed applicants some sort of reason for her refusal. And Mrs. Morris, when they were alone for a moment, said to her:

"I am sorry you feel you cannot take them for partners; but I shall love the Quakers if they are all like you, my dear."

There was one young man who found, he thought, matter for offence in Abby's gentle but firm refusal to dance with him. Carrol Thorn was more insistent than courtesy permitted, and when he found his efforts unavailing he turned away with some bitterness of feeling in his heart against the girl and against the man who kept her for himself.

After a while Clayton took Abby to the supper-room, where a great table was filled with dainty food, and bore upon it at either end a huge bowl filled with punch. Wine was taken by everybody, and by some of the young men not sparingly, so that Abby soon began to see in the faces of the men about her a flush that startled her. Clayton, too, she thought, had not been indifferent to this entice-ment, and she begged him to go with her to the porch again. As they passed through the door-way from the hall to the porch, both of them heard a man say to two or three young men who stood with him:

"She is pretty, but she is a damned abolitionist."

They could not help hearing the words, nor could they help seeing that the man who uttered them was Carrol Thorn.

Thorn's companions quickly withdrew when Clayton and Abby came suddenly upon them; but Thorn, somewhat shamefaced, but too proud to run away, remained by the doorway.

"Come back into the room," said Clayton to

Abby, turning about. Abby obeyed him, but once within, she whispered to him:

"Give no heed to him, Clayton, I pray thee."

Clayton made no answer. He led her to where Dolly was, and said to his sister:

"Care for her, Dolly, for a moment."

Abby dared make no demonstration; but the pallor of her face showed the dread in her heart.

"I fear Clayton will have trouble," she said to Dolly.

"About what?" asked Dolly.

"About me."

Dolly laughed, without understanding the matter, and answered:

"Don't worry about him. He can take care of himself."

Clayton went straight to Thorn and said:

"Did you use those words of Miss Woolford?"

"Yes," answered Thorn, lifting his head and looking at him defiantly.

"In her hearing, too, like a brave man!"

"I did not know she was there."

"You will retract them and apologize to her, then."

"Not at your bidding!"

"But I am the one who will bid you do it. I am her friend."

"I don't care what you are. You will lower your tone and quit your insolence before you will get anything from me."

"You are a liar and a coward!" said Clayton.

Thorn slapped his cheek sharply.

Clayton stood for a moment as if to think if he should spring upon his antagonist and revenge himself then and there. But he controlled his rage and said: "I will kill you for this, man!"

Thorn laughed lightly, turned upon his heel and walked away.

Then Clayton came again to Abby, who waited for him, her soul filled with fear. She no longer cared for the music or the gay scene; hardly could she maintain a semblance of composure whilst she replied to those who talked to her. Abby was hot with eagerness to hear from him a message of peace, but the look upon his face discouraged her hope that the quarrel had been arranged. Clayton tried to speak to her softly and with reassuring words, but the pretence did not deceive her. She saw that wine was in his brain and that passion was there with it.

Then all the scene about her quickly became terrible, and as she looked at the reddened cheeks of many of the men and heard louder laughter and louder talk than there had been two hours before, she rose and putting her hand upon Clayton's arm, said to him:

"Let us go home."

"Why, Abby——" began Clayton, as if to dissuade her.

"Oh, take me home! take me home at once! Oh, please do so, Clayton!"

When they were in the carriage Clayton began to talk lightly of the ball and the dance and the people; but her mind was clear, and she made no answer until presently she said:

"Thee will not quarrel with Mr. Thorn, Clayton?"

Clayton hesitated before replying. Then he said:

"A Southern gentleman has but one answer for the man who is insolent to a woman. I should be unworthy of you if I did not resent an insult to you."

"Not an insult, Clayton. He did not know I was near by. He was angry with me, and rightly, perhaps, because I could not dance with him. And then thee knows Friends are abolitionists."

"But you are not!" answered Clayton.

"I do not know. I never thought much about it. I am just a poor ignorant girl, not used to talking of such things."

"If you are an abolitionist, then I am one," he answered, doggedly. "You are right whatever you are, and what you are I am, and I will stand by you."

"I am a Friend, and Friends do not quarrel. They are always for peace."

"I know, I know," said Clayton, "and no doubt much is to be said for their theories, but they are not understood here. You are my guest. I should be scorned if I did not protect and defend you. My father would send me from his house."

"Forgive him, for my sake."

"No, I cannot. I would die to save you from insult, but the society in which I live will not let me forgive him; and besides, I don't want to forgive him."

Abby withheld her speech for a moment, and then she said:

"And yet, Oh, Clayton! He was right, He only was right, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; who, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. That is the only way. That is the Friends' way. Thee will forgive Mr. Thorn?"

"No!" said Clayton, almost fiercely.

The tears came into Abby's eyes and dread was in her heart; dread deepened by the clear evidence that he was now much inflamed by the drink he had had.

"What will you do, then?" she asked.

"He will apologize, or I will punish him."

Abby moaned, and, speaking as to herself, said:

"I have wandered far from the way of peace in which my people taught me to walk, and now

my God will punish me by making me the cause of violence! Woe to me! Woe to me! Woe to me that my sin should make others sin!"

Then she began to sob. Clayton took her hand in his and spoke tenderly to her.

"You are an angel. You are responsible for nothing."

Then they came to the homestead, and as they entered the door, she said to him once more:

"Promise me, dear Clayton, that you will not quarrel for me. Oh, for my sake promise me that!"

But he kissed her hand and turned away when he had said:

"May all your dreams be peace, my dearest! You shall not suffer for a moment. I will consider the matter."

As the girl disappeared through the doorway, Clayton entered the carriage again and drove furiously back to the Morris house. Thorn was still there, and Clayton, summoning two of his friends to the seclusion of one of the porches, asked them to challenge Thorn to fight him to-morrow morning. He would have the matter ended before the women should have time to plead or to protest.

The first hours of the morning had already come when Clayton returned to Sassafras, having his second and a surgeon with him. They entered the house quietly and for a time sought rest, without removing their garments, in Clayton's room.

When the dawn had begun, the three men went softly out, walking across the lawn to the river, and entered a boat which, with Clayton and his second at the oars, dropped quickly down the stream.

Downward it went for a mile or more until Parker's Bluff was reached, and here the party landed and

climbed the path to the top of the bank. They came out upon the famous picnic ground, where the grass-covered plateau, verging upon the river and with three sides shut in by woods and dense thicket, offered complete solitude and perfect silence.

The grey light of the dawn was being replaced by the splendour which proclaimed the swift coming of the sun, and the unperturbed surface of the river gave a pale reflex of the lustre of the sky.

The quiet water looked cold, and indeed the air was chill and the dew heavy in the thick grass. Thus to the bravest of the young men, weary from the revel of the night, the scene was cheerless.

But Clayton was resolute, and when Thorn had come upon the ground by the path through the wood and his second had conferred with Clayton's second, the distance was measured and the stations fixed. The surgeon opened his box. The pistols were loaded. The duellists took them, and standing face to face at measured distance, waited for the word. Then, just as the sun flung its first blood-red beam across the grass and upon the branches of the great trees, a carriage was heard coming furiously along the road beyond the thicket, and then suddenly it stopped.

The duellists heard it but gave no heed; and at the signal the combatants fired. But, as the report vibrated through the air, it was answered by a shrill cry of terror from a woman's voice in the thicket, and the combatants, turning their smoking weapons downwards, looked inquiringly towards the place whence the cry came.

When Abby parted from Clayton and entered her room a candle burned upon the table, and beneath it lay a letter that had come in the evening's mail from George Fotherly. She knew the writing,

and as she took the letter in her hand she caught the reflection of her figure in the glass, her cheeks flushed, her hair in some disorder, and her gown of bright colours tricked out with ribbons and with lace. She put the letter down again, feeling that the kindest words George should use in writing to her would seem to rebuke her. But she was indeed eager to hear from home, and so opening the letter she sat by the table to read it.

Clearly the writer had not suspected that Abby would be involved in the furious pleasures of the world's people. He wrote quietly of the home things and the home people, speaking of the little occurrences that had engaged the attention of the folks of Connock; giving some unimportant news of the meeting, and commending her to the Father's care with an expression of his firm confidence that amid the temptations of her new life she would keep herself unspotted from the world and faithful to the principles of Friends.

The flush upon Abby's face grew higher as she read the letter. It breathed an atmosphere of purity and tranquillity with which she was familiar and which she loved, and it made the sensuous dance, the passionate music, the half-drunken revelry of the evening just past seem almost hideous. She could not keep back the tears as she folded the letter and put it down; and then swiftly she tore the gay dress from her shoulders and flung it upon a chair, as if somehow it were guilty of misleading her.

The girl's mind dwelt upon the sweet serenity of her life at home, and then turning sharply to the scenes which she had witnessed and in which she had figured at the Morris ball, she whispered to herself:

"The meeting would disown me if it knew what

I have done, and George would turn from me, perhaps!"

Then the sense of her deceitfulness lay heavily upon her. That she should hold her membership upon pretence of faithfulness while indeed she was faithless! That she should transgress and then go home to pretend there had been no transgression. That she should wear the garb and claim fellowship with Friends at Plymouth, when she had clothed herself with finery and sanctioned the folly and wickedness of the world's people at Sassafras! She felt debased and fallen; and she resolved—but she felt that the resolution was made with weakness—that she would no more permit herself to be defiled by these evil things. She would go home at once and strive to regain the place she had lost. But she was conscious that her experience at the ball could not be displaced from her memory; and even while the thought came to her, her mind slipped back to the brilliant room and to the delicious music, and she shut her eyes as she fancied herself again in Clayton's arms whirling about in a kind of ecstasy of happiness.

When she had undressed and had blown the candle out, the time came to pray, and she tried but could not; and so half in despair she sought sleep without it. Sleep would not come. She was weary, but she carried still upon her nerves, in her fast-beating heart and hot head, the excitement of the ball-room. She lay wide awake, hearing the clock in the hallway striking hour after hour, and trying to rid her mind of the memory of the evening. But strive as she would to think of home, of the things in her life that she used to love, of the events of her childhood, of religion and all that it had had for her, her mind always came back again to the ball-room, to the music, to the dance,

to the wine-flushed faces of the men. As the hours went by her sense of guilt became deeper, and more and more repulsive seemed the pleasures into which she had suffered herself to be lured. There was but one grain of sweetness in it all, and that was her love for Clayton; but even this had a flavour also of bitterness, for she knew in the secret recesses of her soul that it had been better for her peace if she had never heard his name or seen his face.

She sat by the window looking out over the lawn as the eastern sky became whiter and more white, when she was start'ed to see three men crossing the lawn to the river. She recognized Clayton. She did not at once guess what his errand might be, but he had not gone far in the boat, the sound of whose oars she plainly heard, when the truth thrust itself upon her mind and she began to tremble. She could hardly refrain from crying aloud, her pain and fear were so great. But she restrained herself, and with the swift resolution of a mind tense with strong emotion, she put a frock about her, seized a cloak and ran down the stairs and out to the stable-yard.

There with difficulty she roused one of the men who slept in a loft over the stable.

"Quick, quick, Joseph! Master Clayton is going to be killed! Come quickly! Hitch the horse and come with me! Hurry, Joseph! Oh, please hurry or we will be too late!"

The negro, hardly awake and not at all comprehending the nature of the situation, soon had the horse harnessed and hitched to the wagon.

"Now drive just as fast as thee can—very, very fast, Joseph, down the river-road to the picnic ground!"

Abby guessed where Clayton had gone.

The driver put the horse to his speed, and then he said:

"Missy, what's dat you say? What's dey a doin' to Mars Clayt? What's dat you tell me?"

"I'm afraid, Joseph, he is going to fight a duel and that he will be killed. Don't talk about it. Hurry, hurry!"

In a few moments the right place upon the road was reached and the carriage stopped. Abby climbed the fence with reckless haste and plunged into the thicket. Thrusting from her the tangled bushes that tore her hands and rent her garments, Abby, her soul filled with fear, made her way through the wood, and while she struggled pistol-shots were heard, and her wrought feelings expressed themselves in a scream. She thought she had come too late.

But she pushed forward through the brake, and presently she came out upon the grassy plateau draggled and dishevelled, but triumphant; for a glance told her she had reached the place in time.

She leaped into the space between the two antagonists, her face white and her eyes distended with terror. For a moment she could not speak. She stood and waved her hands as if to thrust the young men apart. At last she found breath for utterance, and she stammered:

"No! no! no! Thee—thee will kill—no—thee must not—no—do not murder!—Oh, no! no! no! Oh, stop them, stop them!"

Then she put her hands to her face and began to weep passionately, standing still the while, until again she forced herself to cry out, waving her hands as if she would dispel some awful vision.

"Not murder, Clayton—not murder, murder for me! Oh, not that! not that!"

A shudder ran along her body as she spoke;

she tried to move towards Thorn, but she could not. Her force was spent. Thrusting her arms outward as if to save herself, she fell and lay unconscious upon the grass.

Clayton leaped to her side, while the surgeon brought water to bathe her face; and Thorn and the other men stood by pitiful and remorseful.

It was but a moment before the pale face had a flush upon it and the eyes opened. Presently she could be lifted and placed upon some cushions from the boat. She looked upon the men about her as if she wondered why they were here and why she was here. Her memory returned, and she said to Clayton: "Thee did not—did not——?"

"No, no!" answered Clayton tenderly. "No other shot has been fired. We are all here, unhurt. Think of it no more."

"I will go home. Help me, please."

They raised her from the ground with her garments wet with the dew. But she would not move forward. There was something yet for her to say. She turned to Thorn:

"Thee did not mean to speak unkindly of me, did thee?"

"Unkindly of you, Miss Woolford? How could——"

"But if thee did I forgive thee wholly. I forgive thee, and ask complete forgiveness if I have wronged thee in any way. I never did so wittingly."

"You never did!" said Thorn.

"And I need God's pardon more than thine. I will pray for that, and for thee. Thee will not fight again?"

Thorn's eyes fell. Then looking at her he said: "That does not rest with my decision."

"Clayton!" she said, turning to him. "There will be no more?"

"I will obey your wish," he said.

"Nay, Clayton, but that is not enough. Thee must forgive."

Clayton made no answer. Abby's eyes filled afresh with tears as she said:

"But if indeed there be a quarrel, is it not mine? and I have forgiven as I hope to be forgiven. Will thee have a grievance for me when I have none for myself? Shall I not decide? Who gave thee power to put my will aside for thine? There will be no peace for me till thee has yielded. Take my hand, Mr. Thorn," and she held it out to him.

Thorn clasped it, and falling upon one knee he reverently touched it with his lips.

"Now thine, Clayton!"

She stood between them, her strength and her courage come back, holding a hand of each, and then she said with her face uplifted:

"I thank my God that he permitted me to keep these hands from stains of blood. It is of His great mercy, to me, the chief of sinners; and I pray Him that these two children of His, these honest gentlemen, may cast themselves on His mercy for the past, and know the power of His love for all the future. This man is thy friend, Clayton," she said, putting Clayton's hand in Thorn's. "Thee will cherish him for my sake, will thee not?"

So then, she bade farewell to all that stood by, and with Clayton and his second walked slowly to the carriage leaning upon Clayton's arm, and joy shining through the tears upon her face.

Thorn looked after her, and when she had gone a little space, he turned to his companion and said:

"A man might die for a woman like that! God forgive me! God bless her!"

CHAPTER XIV

ABBY RETURNS TO CONNOCK

TWO days after the ball Abby brought her visit to Sassafras to an end. She had intended to stay longer, but now she was glad to turn her face homeward and to escape from a life that had lost nearly all its charm for her. The revelry at the ball, the murderous quarrel between Clayton and Thorn, the strange suspicion that seemed to attend Dolly's relations with Dr. Ramsay, the taint of slavery and of disloyalty that was upon the community, and even the painfulness of her situation with regard to Clayton, combined to fill her soul with longings for the home where everything seemed different and infinitely better than the conditions environing her at Sassafras. The Harleys entreated her to remain; Dolly was eagerly solicitous for prolongation of her visit, and Clayton was both grieved and angry that she should be stubborn in her resolution to depart; but when the hour came for the movement toward the steamboat wharf she was ready, and with reluctance Clayton ordered the carriage, while he and Dolly prepared to accompany her to the river.

When all the farewells were said and she had, with sincerity, thanked Mr. and Mrs. Harley for the kindness of their hospitality, she drove away with the young people, and while the boat lingered at the wharf for the freight that was to be put upon it, Clayton, alone on the deck with her, tried to extract

from her a promise that she would write to him often. But she would make no promises, and afterward when she had parted from him and his sister and the vessel hurried down the river to the bay, past the plantations and the clumps of woodland, she had her mind resolutely set to break the ties that bound her to Clayton and to free herself from what she now felt more than ever to be disgraceful bondage.

It was hard to form such a resolution, and while she strove to do it she was conscious of weakness of will that gave her distrust that she would be able to repulse her lover even if she should give strong promise to herself to do so.

At any rate, she would make no first advance to him, and if he should address himself to her she would consider carefully before she consented to receive him. The feeling was upon her to fly to her mother and to tell her the whole sorrowful story of her troubles; but upon reflection she found that shame for herself and pity for the mother whose burden was heavy enough already would deter her from doing that.

It was, however, she felt, a clear gain to have got away from the atmosphere of Sassafras, and it was with a sense of grateful relief that she walked upon the upper-deck of the steamer in the cool air of the evening with her thoughts turned to the grey house far away upon the Connock hill. Excepting that she still could not suppress her love for Clayton, Sassafras and all things connected with it began to seem in some strange way hateful to her. Her purpose was fixed never to return there again if she could help it.

When she came from her sleeping-room in the morning, the boat had passed Chester and was pushing swiftly up the river toward Philadelphia. She wondered if George would be at the wharf to

meet her; she hoped so, for she was much drawn to him now, since her Southern friends had lost some of their attractiveness, but she feared he would not have had time to hear from the letter she had written to her mother announcing her home-coming. But as the boat drew in to the wharf the first person she saw standing there was George Fotherly, and when the gang-plank was set he came at once upon the vessel, and after greeting her, obtained possession of her baggage.

He saw in her bright eyes the pleasure she felt at meeting him, and it filled him with happiness. He led her out among the casks and bags and baskets and boxes across the pier to a carriage into which they were about to get, when to Abby's amazement Penelope presented herself.

At first Abby did not understand why she was there.

"Why, Penelope!" she exclaimed, "how did you get here? You were not on the boat?"

"Yes'm'," answered the girl.

"But, how—did Miss Dolly tell you — to — to——?"

"I runned away, Missy, jes's I said I would."

"And you came on the boat? I did not see you."

"No, Missy, I was a hidin' down among de boxes and truck and pretty near dead for want o' bref an' sleep."

Abby was perplexed.

"She is Dolly's servant," said Abby to George. "What shall we do with her? It would seem dreadful to the Harleys if I should take her to our house."

"Really," answered George, "there seems to be no help for it. Thee cannot have her stay hungry and penniless in a strange city. Let her

come with us, and we can then decide what had better be done."

In his heart George did not feel sorry for the Harleys, and he had no purpose to try to do anything with Penelope but to keep her in freedom.

He put her into the cab with himself and Abby, and soon all three of them were on the train for Connock, where Rachel was waiting with a warm and tearful welcome, and where Penelope, with a smiling face, was taken to the kitchen and to a hearty breakfast. She had no notion to embarrass the Woolfords or to take the risk that Mrs. Ponder would recognize her and write to Sassafras about her. In a few hours she had disappeared from the grey house, and long afterward, when slavery was no longer an institution in Maryland, Abby heard of her as a servant in a Quaker family in another county.

Dr. and Mrs. Ponder came over to the grey house in the evening of the day of Abby's return, and both were glad to have her with them again. Mrs. Ponder asked her minutely about her visit, and about all the members of her sister's family, and Abby told her everything but those things she would have been ashamed to tell and to have Mrs. Ponder hear.

Mrs. Ponder was very shrewd, and although Abby spoke warmly of the pleasure that had attended her visit to Sassafras, the minister's wife was sure something had happened which had left a flavour of bitterness in the girl's mind.

"They are most kind and lovable people," she said, "and I was sure you would have a good time. But, of course, my dear, they are very different in many ways from the folks about here. Even sister has changed greatly in her views and methods since she married into a Southern family."

"Changed completely," said Dr. Ponder. "Don't

you remember, Isabel, the time she stayed with us while I was in my first parish, she insisted upon becoming a member of the woman's anti-slavery society? And now she actually owns slaves and glories in it!"

"She was only a young and foolish girl then, birdie, and it is hardly fair to hold her seriously responsible for her actions. And very naturally, I think, when she married she adopted her husband's views and went to extremes in her opinions, as women often do."

"Always do!" said Dr. Ponder, with emphasis.

"No, not always, birdie! You can't reasonably say that I am extreme about anything, unless it be my church views. And then I think we ought to remember that as a matter of fact there is much to be said for the theory so firmly held by sister that the curse placed upon Ham as recorded in the Scriptures does seem to give some sort of warrant for human slavery."

"There is absolutely nothing in it! I have carefully examined the entire subject, and I positively deny the whole Ham proposition."

"Still, birdie, I really do recall the sermon you preached years ago in your first parish rather sustaining the proposition, and I remember the earnestness and heartiness with which Senator Wigger, who was a Democrat, complimented you upon it."

"That was before I had studied the matter thoroughly and I was very young and not wise; and at any rate, my dear, my plan has always been to let bygones be bygones. Tell me, Abby, something about the dear old church near to Sassafras, planted two hundred years ago by the missionary zeal of the Mother Church in England."

But, alas! Abby had almost nothing to say about the Sassafras church. She had been there once,

and thought the service very dull and the discoloured spittoons in the pews very dreadful, and besides, her interest had been centred during all the time of her visit upon things at Sassafras that were wholly apart from ecclesiastical influences.

The next morning Abby took up with new relish the household duties she had been used to perform, and soon she had settled down once more to the routine of common life which she had followed all her days with tranquillity and satisfaction. The time went quickly by, and before long her hope that Clayton would not write to her was displaced by wonder that he did not write, and the wonder did not have time to grow before a long letter from him came to her.

She was disturbed by the eagerness with which she read it, and she hid it away with a resolution that she would not answer it. Then she changed her mind and determined to send an answer after a long delay. When she had read the letter for the tenth time, she found herself pitying Clayton for the distress he would suffer because of her silence, and she resolved to pen an answer to-morrow. That night another letter, pleading and passionate, came from him, and she wrote to him, with what she thought dignified reserve, before she went to bed.

Abby's affected coldness had no chilling influence upon Clayton; it gave him some uneasiness and therefore it intensified the fervour of the response that speedily came to her. Thereafter there was no pretence that she was not glad to hear from him, and letters went to and fro several times a week; but Abby carefully hid from her mother the fact that she was in correspondence with Clayton.

Epistolary love-making has its delights, but they are inferior to the methods which permit eye-to-eye and hand-to-hand, and before the autumn was far

advanced Clayton had striven to devise some plan which would enable him to come to Connock and to remain there. The call of his beloved Southland, of which he often talked somewhat vain-gloriously, seemed to have lost much of its imperiousness now that the impulses of his affection urged him to travel northward.

Christmas was not far off when he wrote to Abby that he had obtained a clerkship in the office of one of the great iron-mills that lie along the levels of the wide meadows by the river at the foot of the Connock hill, and that he should come to the town to take the place before the year was out. He explained that it was necessarily repugnant to the feelings of a Southern gentleman to accept a position so humble, especially when honour awaited him upon the field of glory in Virginia, but this, he urged, was a part of the large sacrifice he was prepared to make that he might be near to the woman he loved.

When Clayton came to the town and took lodgings, he had proposed to himself that he would become a very frequent visitor to the grey house; but Abby was afraid to have it so, and when her parents learned that he was to live in Connock and discovered his fondness for Abby's society they were disturbed, and warned the girl to act circumspectly with him. Rachel did not like him as a man, and she and Isaac were strongly unwilling that Abby should become interested in a possible suitor who was not a member of their own Society; but Clayton was Mrs. Ponder's nephew and must frequently visit the parsonage, and they were unwilling peremptorily to forbid his coming to see Abby, lest they might give offence to their next-door neighbour, whose kind offices to them were given often and with genuine feelings of friendship.

So Clayton was advised by Abby that in her home

their intercourse could not be unrestrained, and almost inevitably Abby, entreated to meet her lover surreptitiously, at last consented. She took many long walks in the wintry weather and found him waiting for her; he came to the parsonage often, and had uninterrupted opportunity for free talk with her; she crept into the church sometimes when he was drawn there upon the pretext that he would practice upon the organ, and sometimes he contrived to discover when she had an errand to the city and to find an excuse for riding beside her in the train.

Two or three times Clayton hired a horse and wagon, and Abby would walk across the river-bridge and there get into the vehicle with him and for an hour or two drive about among the hills.

But in a community like Connock proceedings of this kind cannot well escape publicity. Before long the curious observers of their neighbours' movements began to note the frequency of Abby's appearances in Clayton's company, and there were some members of Meeting who were so disturbed by it that they considered if they should not have a committee call upon Isaac and Rachel Woolford to counsel them against permitting this promising young Friend, their daughter, to become too much involved with an admirer who belonged, not only with the world's people, but with the guilty owners of African slaves. But with quite characteristic prudence action upon the matter was postponed until the reasons for such intermeddling with Isaac's family affairs should seem to be more imperative.

One sunny afternoon in early February Clayton took Abby for a drive up the hillside on the road that led in a roundabout way to George Fotherly's farm. It was not much travelled excepting in the winter-time, for there was a better road with easier grades through the Aramink glen; but when the

winter came it always happened that the snow lay deep in the glen, or else, if the rain came heavily upon it, it turned to ice which covered all the roadway so that horsemen feared it, and with roughened shoes upon their beasts went cautiously. In such a time the brook that tumbled through the pass had fierceness as it ran among the rocks, whirling itself about the crookedness of the channel, flinging itself here and there until the twigs of the bushes, the tops of the great stones, and even the trunks of the trees that stood near the brook were white with a coating of ice.

Thus the hillside road, where the sun always beat, was preferred by careful drivers at this season of the year, and besides, the view of the valley and the river and all the country around Connock was very fine, and the road ran right through the woods that covered the hill from base to summit.

Often when George and Abby had looked across from the garden of the grey house they had said they were not sure if the hills were not loveliest in the winter-time. For when the leaves were off and the snow lay all over the surfaces beneath the trees, there were revelations that the leafy summer would not permit. The white light developed every twist of the trunks of the trees, every tangle of the branches, every angle of their inclination. Seen from afar, all the trees but those at the very top were in black outline against the snow, and the hills seemed somehow different in their frank nakedness under the flood of light from what they had done with the summer foliage. One could see the outline of each summit clearly as it rose from the West with a rounded crest and dipped to the East with a feathery crown of trees, and the passes that lay between them were robbed of all their mystery, but clothed with a novel and wonderful beauty as the snow

permitted their farthest and deepest depths to be perceived by him who looked from the Connock hills across the river.

The lovers found the drive delightful, and they went farther from home than was intended, so that the shadows of the swift-falling night were about them as they turned into the hillside road among the trees on their way downward toward Connock.

There is a sharp turn in the road where it sets off to southward, and here the front wheel of Clayton's carriage caught in a rut and one of the springs was broken. He stopped the horse and got out to try to fix the spring, and Abby, sitting in the carriage, became impatient and alarmed at the increasing darkness. How, she thought, should she account to her father and mother for this strange absence from home at a late hour?

Clayton found the task of making repairs there in the gloom not easy, and while he laboured with it Abby said to him:

"Some one is coming up the road, and I am sure he will help you."

The other carriage came near, and Clayton, stepping out towards it, said:

"I have broken something and I can't quite get it right. Will you be so kind as to lend me a hand?"

"Surely!" responded the stranger, stopping his horse, fastening the lines to the dash-board and leaping to the ground.

Abby's heart stopped beating for a moment when she heard the voice and then recognized the form of George Fotherly. That was the one encounter she had hoped to avoid in her rambles with Clayton. George affected not to see her, and the increasing darkness gave him quite a sufficient excuse for his neglect; but she was certain he knew her, and cer-

tain that he would be cruelly hurt because he had found her in such a place in such company.

George spoke to Clayton as to an acquaintance, and then, taking some bits of rope from his own carriage, he fixed the broken spring in a few moments in such fashion that Clayton could move slowly forward. Mounting to his own wagon he said farewell and drove away, leaving Abby, full of troubled thoughts, to go with Clayton.

Since Clayton came to Connock to stay George had never seen him at the grey house nor in Abby's company, and though he still dreaded that Abby cared for the Southerner, his fears had been in a measure lulled and his hope for his own cause strengthened. Now, however, as he drove up the hill to the farm new light had come to him, and he entered his house with rage and despair in his heart.

All through the night he thought of the girl he loved so much and of the clear evidence he now had of her strong favour for the stranger, and to the bitterness of his disappointment was added the sharp pain and the conviction that the man was wholly unworthy of her.

Waking from broken sleep in the morning, George began to consider if something could not be done, not for his sake, but for Abby's sake, to separate her from Clayton. And it so happened that while he sat at the breakfast-table meditating upon the subject, his man came in with the mail from the Connock post office. Among the letters was one from a Friend who lived in the county town not many miles away from the Sassafras plantation—a Friend known to George by name and a man of high character. It read thus:

"DEAR FRIEND,—I am moved to write to thee about a matter which may concern some of thy near

neighbours and friends, and I do so with reluctance because I am not sure that there is any peril to thy friends or that I have judged rightly in presuming to intrude myself in other people's business. But I know I may trust thy wise discretion, and so I ask thee to maintain silence and to destroy this letter if in thy judgment I am mistaken. Late in the summer a dear young Friend, daughter of Isaac Woolford of Connock, whom once I knew, visited the Sassafras plantation near to us, and was much involved, I fear, in the frivolous amusement of the world's people. This may have concerned me, but I should have held my peace had not rumour in our neighbourhood coupled her name with that of the son of the Sassafras people as a possible suitor for her hand. This same rumour, widely circulated here, declares that the young man was married some time ago in Mexico, and that his wife is still living there. He has striven to keep his marriage secret, and it is not known, I learn, even to his father and mother; but I think Isaac Woolford should hear of the report if it be true that the youth has gone to Connock and persists in courting his daughter, and I leave it with thee to determine whether the conditions will warrant thee in carrying it to him.

With much esteem, THY FRIEND.

To George Fotherly.

When George had read the letter he folded it and put it in his pocket. Then he went out upon his porch and thence to his duties among the farm buildings, meaning to consider what he should do with this remarkable revelation.

CHAPTER XV

AT BAY

GEORGE'S first feeling, when he examined the letter, was of exultation. If it were true that Clayton already had a wife, then there was better promise than he had dared to hope that Abby might be his wife. And as he thought upon Clayton's pursuit of the girl, who was presumably ignorant of the marriage, George's anger grew and he called Clayton a villain whom to expose and denounce was an imperative duty.

Then, as he meditated upon the matter, he perceived that the time had not yet come for harsh judgment or for hostile action. The Friend in Maryland reported nothing but rumour, confessing that he might be mistaken and putting upon George an obligation to proceed cautiously. Before he could venture to come between Abby and the young Southerner he must discover some means by which the truth should be clearly made known, and the serious question at once presented itself how this was to be done in a safe and inoffensive manner.

He found that he dared not speak to Abby about it lest he should seem to her impelled by mean jealousy, and he felt sure that, if report had wronged Clayton, he, George, would appear contemptible to the girl and finally ruin his own cause. He shrank also from presenting the matter in any form to Isaac and Rachel Woolford. No doubt

they would be grateful to him for any kind of suggestion that would separate Abby from a suitor who must be unwelcome to them, but if he could not justify his interference by incontrovertible evidence, he might be discredited by them also and made ashamed of such an attack upon an innocent man.

The thought came to him that he might sound Dr. and Mrs. Ponder respecting Clayton's antecedents; but probably they knew nothing of his marriage if he were married, and in any case they would think it strange that he should manifest curiosity about Clayton's personal matters.

Finally it seemed to George that the manly thing and the safe thing to do would be to seek for Clayton and to talk with him in such a way as to induce him to give some sign that the report about his marriage had a basis of fact. This task would be neither easy nor agreeable; but George resolved to undertake it under conditions that he believed would not be offensive to the Southerner if Clayton were an innocent man.

It was now beyond doubt, he thought, that Abby really cared for Clayton. He had hoped it was not so, and for a good while he had found little difficulty in attributing to some other cause than love for Clayton the girl's apparent fondness for his company. But since her return from Maryland the proofs were many that there had been love-passages between them, and George was convinced that the door of hope had finally been closed to him, while Abby's sojourn at Sassafras had given to Clayton the enormous advantage of propinquity.

If, then, Abby really loved the man, and the man were unmarried and of fine enough character to be fit for her, was it not his duty to sacrifice himself for her sake, and, neglecting the circumstances that

Clayton was not a Friend, to stand aside that Abby might have her heart's desire? At first George could hardly bring himself to accept this view of the matter; but from the depths of his soul he did desire happiness for Abby, and he knew that it would not come to her if she had strong affection for Clayton and were forced to give him up.

After much wrestling with himself and with many doubts and fears lest the course he proposed to take should not after all be wise, he determined to talk frankly with Clayton. To this end he wrote to the youth and a meeting was arranged in the parlour of Clayton's boarding-house.

George's manner was quiet as he began to speak upon the subject that lay upon his mind, but he was not at ease. He found the matter difficult for speech, and besides he had the heart-ache.

"Will thee forgive me, Friend Harley," he said, "if I make bold to talk to thee of a matter of some delicacy that seems to lie between thee and me?"

"What is it?" responded Clayton, setting his mind to defiance, for he suspected that George would speak to him of Abby.

"Thee cannot think that I could help perceiving thy partiality for Abigail Woolford, or that she seems to feel something more than simple friendliness for thee."

"How can I tell what you have perceived?"

"I have known her," continued George, not noticing the unpleasantness of this response, "since she was a little child. For many years I have been much in her company; often we have worshipped together, and her father and mother have been my near friends and have welcomed me to their house. If I cared only for them I could not have looked with indifference upon any friendship she

should form; but I do not care alone for them; I care much for her."

"Well?"

"I had always thought that she regarded me with favour, and I think she did until she met thee; but now——"

"Pardon me," said Clayton, "but in my country gentlemen do not talk of such matters freely with other men."

"It is not easier for me than for thee," said George, "to talk openly of a thing so sacred, and if I compel myself to do it now, it is because I owe something to her as well as to myself. I tell thee plainly that I had hoped to make her my wife."

Clayton felt a little pang of sorrow for this simple-hearted man, and he answered:

"Still she has not promised you, and many a man before you has deceived himself in such matters."

"I know it," responded George. "I have no rights, perhaps I have no claim to consideration in the case. I do not make complaint, nor would I turn her from her heart's desire if I could, unless—unless it were to protect her from hurt."

"You imagine that I would hurt her, do you?"

"I cannot say that. It seems to me that she might be happier if she should retain fellowship with her own people; but I am not sure that I can trust myself to form a fair impartial judgment. But when I saw that she was drawn to thee in some degree, I could not help considering if indeed thee was wholly worthy of her. Thee will forgive me for saying that?"

"Who is to be the judge of my worthiness or unworthiness if she cares for me and I care for her? We can hardly refer the matter to you."

George reflected for a moment, and then he answered:

"I will not presume to judge thee, but thee will not think harshly of me if I ask thee severely to judge thyself."

"I will permit no meddling," answered Clayton sharply. He felt that this quiet Quaker was reaching very dexterously for the weak place in his armour.

"It is a strange case we are in," said George, "and the way is not clear to me; but I am sure thee loves the girl, and I am not ashamed to say to thee that I love her."

"The choice, then, is with the woman, and that will end it."

"Yes," answered George, "her decision will end it; but may I say to thee with much courtesy that a decision so important should be made with full knowledge? Abigail knows my life to its very centre. She has always known it. Is thy life clear, or does thee hide something from her?"

Clayton made an exclamation of impatience and anger.

"I will tell thee why I ask that. It is because I am ready to make a sacrifice for her which I cannot express in words. It is easy to say I would cut off that hand for her," and the farmer thrust out his huge brown right hand, "or that I would give my life for her peace if God should call me to that surrender. Such things have been said many times. I do not speak idly, but from my soul, as in God's presence, when I say that to give her up to thee would be a more terrible sacrifice; and yet I will do that and carry desolation in my soul to the end of my life if she loves thee and thee is worthy of her. But is it too much to require of thee, before I put the knife to my heart, that thee tell

the fair truth about thyself? Is thee capable of such sacrifice for her? Thee may be, but forgive me if I doubt it."

"Let us end this folly," exclaimed Clayton, rising. George sat still, his face overclouded.

"Sit down!" he said fiercely, and Clayton obeyed, surprising himself by obeying.

George looked steadfastly at him and Clayton quailed beneath his eyes.

"I have spoken gently with thee," said George, his voice having a new sternness, "but now I must be less considerate. "Thee is not an honest man!"

Clayton started as if to leap upon him, but restrained himself. Had George put forth his strength he could have crushed the smaller man with those great arms of his. But Clayton did not fear his physical strength. He cowered before the belief that George knew his secret.

"Your peace principles protect you in your insolence," said Clayton with a show of courage.

"I can look right into thy soul and perceive that thee is not an honest man," said George, calmly.

"Preachers and women," said Clayton, "are always privileged to offer insult with impunity."

"Thy heart is not right in the sight of God," answered George, "and thy hands are not clean. I will make no sacrifice that will permit evil to triumph with thee."

"See here!" exclaimed Clayton, desperately. "I don't know what you know, or what you think you know, and I don't care. I will have no more lecturing or snivelling from you. Miss Woolford knows the very worst about me that she can know, and if she is satisfied with me, it is a matter of complete indifference to me whether you are satisfied or not. A rejected suitor never is satisfied.

I can pity you, but I can't stand your preaching or your impertinence. We had better part."

"Is thee her suitor?"

"Never mind whether I am or not."

"Thee is already a married man. Thee is infamous!"

"You're a fool!" said Clayton, turning and walking from the room.

There could be no longer any question concerning the truth of the report of Clayton's marriage, and George left the house hot with anger against the man who was dealing so basely with Abby. That George should interpose in some peremptory fashion to thrust the Southerner away from the girl finally and forever was a sacred obligation to her and to her parents; but he was not a little puzzled to know just how the feat might be accomplished.

That he would accomplish it, Clayton, for his part, was confident. The secret was out, and Clayton knew very well that even if George Fotherly had not been in love with Abby his relations with her parents and the Friends' Society, no less than his desire to protect an innocent girl from evil, would impel him to make the fact of Clayton's marriage known.

The young man was not happy at the prospect. In truth, he was deeply ashamed to think that George was capable of vast sacrifice while he was wickedly selfish. He began to consider if he should not surrender Abby and his place in the mill and all his hopes, and go away from Connock. That appeared to be beyond his power of resolution. Then he reflected upon the possibility of divorce; but there was little hope in that direction, because Abby's parents, and possibly Abby herself, would not consent to her marriage with a divorced man. There were but two things to do: to run away and

to abandon for ever the woman he loved so much and who loved him, or to remain and to face boldly the consequences of anything George Fotherly should be able to do for his discomfiture.

George's method of dealing with the matter was not at all what Clayton expected. Instead of warning Abby and her parents, the Quaker called upon Dr. Ponder, and in the privacy of his study read to him the letter that had come from Maryland, omitting the references to Abby's indulgence in worldly practices. He explained to the minister why he had not made the revelation to the Woolfords, choosing rather to present it to Clayton's relative and to invite him to interpose for Abby's protection from her lover.

Dr. Ponder was inclined at first to question the truthfulness of the report of Clayton's marriage, but when George told him of his own talk with the young man the doctor was shocked and indignant, and at once declared that he would compel Clayton to separate himself from Abby. He proposed to accomplish that result by threatening to lay the whole matter before Isaac Woolford unless Clayton should comply with his wishes.

The doctor agreed with George that nothing should be said to anybody upon the subject, that Abby might be more fully shielded from scandal. Not even Mrs. Ponder was to be informed of the report about Clayton until, at any rate, strong measures should become necessary.

Doctor Ponder sent at once for Clayton, and calling him into the study locked the door upon him. Usually the youth was not much in dread of his uncle, of whom he was apt to speak lightly; but now he sat in the chair facing the minister with a grave countenance and a mind filled with fear of trouble to come.

Without naming George, Dr. Ponder said to Clayton that reports had come to him of the young man's secret marriage, and with much solemnity of manner the minister put the direct question to him:

"I ask you now if these reports are true?"

Clayton was disposed to be evasive.

"What is the source of the rumours?" he asked.

"We will have no dodging!" said the doctor sternly. "It is of no consequence at this juncture where they came from. What I want to know is, Are they true?"

"Fotherly has been maligning me to you," said Clayton, sullenly.

Dr. Ponder was resolved to keep close to the question:

"Are the reports true?" he insisted.

"Suppose I do not choose to answer?"

"Then I shall have no doubt of your guilt."

"Guilt!" exclaimed Clayton. "Is it sinful for a man to be married?"

"Are you married?" demanded the minister again.

"And if I am, what of it?"

"Let us have the fact established first, and then we can take up consideration of consequences. I am sure you are married because, if you were single, your refusal to give a direct answer to my question would be stupid and ridiculous."

"Very well," said Clayton, "let it go at that."

"Now," said Dr. Ponder, "so far as you are concerned, it is no concern of mine if you are married, or unmarried or if you were married secretly or openly or whether you married above you or below you, excepting in the measure that my relationship with you, through your aunt, may give to me, as it has done, an interest in your affairs and your wel-

fare. I have wished you well for your mother's sake, and as you have been brought up within the fold of the church with all the privileges and under all the influences that she has for the benefit of her children, I have hoped that you had before you a career of honour and happiness."

"Come to the point, uncle, please!" said Clayton, not in the humour to listen to a long discourse.

"I come to it at once, sir," said Dr. Ponder, angrily, "by saying that for a man with a wife, whether he hides her or displays her, to pay attentions to a pure and lovely and unsuspicious girl and to try to win her love and to wreck her life with his false pretences, is to stamp himself as a scoundrel who deserves the scorn and contempt and the indignant repudiation of every man who has a spark of honour in his soul! There, sir! that is the way in which I come to the point!"

Clayton was white with rage, but he remained silent:

"And now, sir," continued the doctor, rising from his chair and with his forefinger pointed at Clayton and menacing him, "if I hear again of your association with the young woman in question, I shall expose you at once to her and to her father and mother and to the community. Meantime, do not let me see your face again until you have made up your mind to act like an honest man instead of a contemptible sneaking rascal."

Then Dr. Ponder unlocked the door, opened it, went out, slammed it and retired to his chamber upstairs, leaving Clayton to find his way to the street a beaten, half insane man.

To Abby he managed to convey intelligence that it would be no longer safe for them to meet, but he did not tell her why, though when she remembered the meeting with George upon the hill-

side road she guessed that George had something to do with the interruption of the meetings.

Thus the winter passed, and Abby for many weeks did not once see Clayton, but was forced to content herself with the letters he wrote to her frequently, letters she answered often with lavish use of terms of endearment.

Late in March the weather in Connock and in the upper valley became warm, and for four days there were heavy and continuous rains. With the snow lying deep on all the hills, the people who had lived long in the valley were apprehensive of disaster; and sure enough before the fourth day of rain had begun each brook upon the side of the hills was a roaring torrent, the water in the river had risen to the brim and then overflowed upon all the low places, and from the base of the Connock hill to the foot of the hills across the stream there was a wild, yellow rushing tide full of black drifting things, sweeping with frightful force down through the narrow gorge at Spring Mill.

The water was over the meadows and over the railroad that ran between the meadows and the town. All the iron mills and their office buildings were flooded deeper than the height of a man by the swift eddying tawny flood, and while the rain poured steadily downward on the fourth day, the waters swelled higher and higher, threatening destruction to everything in their pathway.

In spite of the rain, half the people in Connock gathered at points above the level of the flood to watch the spectacle. But the mill-owners, fearing further rising of the waters, began to strive to remove the books and papers from their offices. Already everything of value had been taken to the second floors of the buildings, and now at the second story windows boats were moored while the men

within carried and put into them such things as it was desired to save.

It was a perilous business, for the current had tremendous power, and the water was full of logs of wood and other drifting things which added to the danger that menaced the boats from the fury of the waters.

George Fotherly stood with the crowd that watched with eager interest the boat that swung to the rope that was fastened to the window of the mill-office opposite him across the wallow that covered the railroad. Into that boat presently he saw Clayton Harley climb and take the oars. He was compelled to confess that the man was not cowardly, at any rate. The bravest might reasonably have shrunk from encountering the perils of directing a boat through that wild welter of waters.

When Clayton was ready the rope was loosened, and he tried to turn the bow of the boat toward the shore. The little craft was whirled about among the eddies, but it made some headway and for a moment seemed likely to reach the land. Within twenty feet of the place where George stood a great log came booming down the stream, and striking Clayton's boat fairly in the middle, overturned it and hurled him and his books and papers into the water.

A murderous wish flashed through George Fotherly's mind. Here was one way, indeed, to settle the trouble with the Southerner and to settle it for ever. But before he could think of the wickedness of such a thought, he flung off his coat, and plunging into the flood, he had his hand on Clayton's collar and was pushing for the shore with the might of a strong swimmer. A dozen men were there to drag them both from the water, and when George had come upon his feet and had perceived that

Clayton's life was safe, he fairly ran up the little hill behind the crowd and made his way to Isaac Woolford's to have his clothing dried.

He could not cross the river to his own home until the flood was gone.

He did not say, nor did Abby and her parents until long after know, that he had rescued Clayton. What Abby knew before the day was over was that Clayton had narrowly escaped drowning, and her heart was glad that he was still alive.

Separation from him, and constant persual of his passionate letters, was strengthening her love for him, and as she thought of him and brooded over her troubles all her good resolutions disappeared, and she found herself willing to consider desperate measures as not beyond her will if only she might see him and commune with him again.

CHAPTER XVI

INTO THE GULF

THAT she might receive Clayton's letters without her mother's knowledge, Abby went to the post-office every morning and evening for the mail for the house, secreting the letters until she could find opportunity to read them alone.

One morning in September when she saw the familiar handwriting on one of the envelopes given to her by the postmaster, she thrust the letter into her pocket and walked homeward quickly. Having given the rest of the mail to her mother, and having spoken to her a word or two of some commonplace matter, Abby ran to her room and locked the door. Drawing a chair near to the window she opened the letter and read this:

"MY PRECIOUS ABBY,—Why should we longer endure the torture of separation? I am almost certain that horrid woman is dead and that I am free. Come to me then, dearest, and let us go away somewhere far into the West and as man and wife begin the life to which every longing of our souls summons us. To-morrow, at seven in the evening, I will have a carriage waiting for you on the Gulf road between the old mill and the hanging rock. Find your way thither unobserved, and we will drive swiftly to Radnor station and catch the through-train for Pittsburg. Make this sacrifice for me, my darling, and I will give all my life for you.

"CLAYTON."

Abby's cheeks were hot before she had half read the letter, and when she had read it to the end she returned and read it again and again.

She had never dared to permit her thought to dwell upon the dread adventure to which her lover now invited her, but she had long known that it was among the things the future might present to her, and even when her mind had turned away from it by violent effort and with a sort of horror, she had perceived lurking deep in her consciousness the assurance that the temptation would come to her to engage in this terrible enterprise.

It had come now, and as she held in her hand the letter she had learned by heart and looked through the window at the trees and the grass, she said to herself that she could not do what Clayton asked of her ; and yet in the secret chambers of her soul she knew that she would do it.

She was sure intellectually that Clayton's wife was not dead, but her passion impelled her to override her reason and to accept Clayton's conjecture as fact. She could not estimate all the shame to her, all the misery to father and mother, all the loss of self-respect and all the surrender of religious hope involved in flight with her lover ; but she could perceive a part of the awfulness of the consequences ; and yet she found herself setting over against them the joy of complete union with Clayton and finding in their devotion to each other compensation even for so mighty a sacrifice.

Before she left the room to answer her mother's call to some household duties she had resolved to reconsider the whole matter at her leisure. She need not act, she thought, until the evening of the next day, and by that time she would have regained her self-control and could make the right decision. She pretended to herself, as she thrust

the letter into the depth of a bureau drawer, that she was still free to do as she pleased; but there was no self-deception. She was held fast by a power which urged her towards Clayton with irresistible force. As she closed the drawer her thought ran swiftly over the things, few in number, that she should have to take with her in her flight, and she went downstairs to look at her mother and to think of the anguish she should soon bring to that unsuspecting woman who loved her so dearly.

The infernal power is always ready with opportunity when one is bent upon doing evil. Abby would keep tryst with Clayton on Thursday evening, and on that evening her father and mother went to the city at five o'clock to take supper with some friends. They would not return until nine or ten o'clock. Thus Abby might leave home without having any one to question her. She could hardly restrain her tears as she saw her parents go through the front gate on their way to the station. She should never see them again, she thought, and this seemed so dreadful to consider when she was face to face with the fact, that she tried to resolve not to go to meet Clayton, "I can spend the evening in praying," she said; "or I can go in and stay and find comfort and diversion with Mrs. Ponder; or I can walk in the opposite direction toward the meeting-house and so put distance between me and temptation."

Any of these things indeed she could have done, but even while she persuaded herself she was considering them, she was busy closing the house, putting into a little hand-bag some toilet articles, and laying out the dress she should wear as she went to meet her lover. She took from the drawer his letter and put it into the pocket of the dress.

She went to the supper table at six, eating almost

nothing, but trying to determine if she should leave a note for her mother. She foresaw that the first uncertainty of her parents respecting her absence from home would be terrible for them, but she could not find courage to put upon paper a statement of the truth.

"I will write to them," she said, "as soon as we shall be married, and ask their forgiveness."

Soon after six o'clock she put on her bonnet and wrapped a light shawl about her, and taking in her hand the bag, she left the house. Softly she closed the door behind her, as if the smallest noise might reveal her purpose. Quietly she swung open the front gate, which she left unlatched as she descended the steps to the sidewalk.

She started down the street with her mind in a strange condition of exaltation in which dread was mingled. She seemed to herself not herself, or as if she were acting a part in a dream; but there was no repentance, no thought of retreat, no further consideration of consequences. She walked to her doom as if choice were ended and sin had obtained complete dominion over her.

Her eyes were fixed upon the pavement as with hurried nervous steps she moved down the street. She wished to meet no one she knew, for she felt as if an acquaintance, looking into her eyes, might read her soul. Quickly she passed the bridges over the railroad, the canal and the river, and then the hills were before her, and the road that went sharply to the left to sweep upward into the gorge that led to George Fotherly's farm. For the first time since she read Clayton's letter she thought of George, and now a wave of anguish passed over her spirit as she realized not only the suffering which her misconduct would inflict upon that brave and pure soul, but the shame in which in his thought she

would be involved because of her flight. Then suddenly she remembered the promise she had made to George that she would never marry any one but him. Falsehood, base, wicked falsehood, was now added to her other wickedness. When she made that promise she was sure Clayton would never in her lifetime be free. She could not then have believed that she would fall so far as to fly with him while there was good reason to believe his wife was still living.

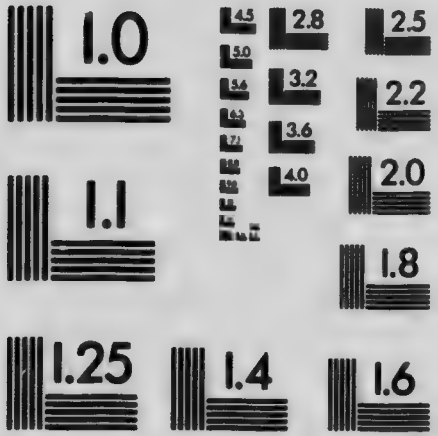
She now saw with perfect clearness, as if a flash of lightning had revealed it to her, the immeasurable superiority of her old companion to this man who beckoned her to infamy, and her knees almost gave way beneath her. Could she not even yet retreat? How could she bear the certainty of George's pity or of his scorn? "But no!" she said, "it is too late to go back." She had chosen dishonour at any rate, and what matters the degree if one has become a shameless outcast?

So she did not pause. Her love was not for George, but for that other man, however unworthy he might be, who was even now waiting for her and longing for her at the meeting-place. Her soul leaped out to him. She could not give him up even to have peace and to save herself and her dear ones from dishonour.

She turned to the right as she left the end of the river-bridge, and with more rapid step began the gentle ascent of the Radnor road. Here the highway, thick with white dust, runs upward for a while between rows of houses, with gardens before and behind them, while high on either hand the green hills bound the narrow valley. The sun was down, but there was light enough to see the crests of the hills, crowned with foliage, and to observe how they flanked the road to the eastward and the westward so far as the eye could reach.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Up and on the girl climbed the road until the houses became few in number; forward and upward, always rising to higher lifts above the river until, when two miles had been traversed, she saw straight ahead of her the Gulf Church above the level of the road. She came to it just when the highway reached the crest of the hill. Below and in front of her stretched far away the Gulf Valley, through which pours a turbulent rivulet. It comes downward through the Gulf Valley until it encounters the ridge upon which the church stands—a ridge thrown by Nature right across the end of the valley as a barrier which the stream cannot cross until all the Gulf should be brimming with the imprisoned waters and transformed into a lake. But Nature has another way of escape for the stream, for in the high hills to the right it has hewed out a gap through which the water pours, finding beyond the hills a channel to permit it to reach the distant river.

Abby turned the corner sharply at the church and walked upon the descending way leading to the Gap, now but a quarter of a mile distant. The dusk was gathering as she began the descent, and the hundreds of tombstones clustered upon the hillside behind the church seemed strangely white as the light faded from the sky. Abby glanced at them while she went by, but her mind was now alert to discover the presence of Clayton. She should be with him in a few moments, and her eagerness to see him was sharpened as the time for meeting came near.

It was gloomy in the Gap when she approached it, but she could discern that no vehicle stood in the road even beyond the hanging rock.

"I am early," she said. "It is not yet seven o'clock."

She moved with slower footsteps close to the

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shadow of the great hills that reared themselves above the road, and when she had come as far as the old mill she stopped. Nobody was there. She felt completely safe. She sat upon a stone just off the road by the side of the brook and listened to the brawling waters that hurried by through the cleft in the hills.

She remembered for a moment that along this road Washington's army had marched on its way to Valley Forge, and had encamped for a night at this lovely spot. Here also, but she did not know it, George Fotherly and Dolly Harley had galloped on that day when they rode together.

Several minutes passed after Abby had sat down, and her ears were open for the noise of carriage wheels. She listened and she looked, but there was no sound excepting the ripple of the waters, and the increasing darkness continually narrowed the range of her vision.

The thought that Clayton might not come had never entered her mind, and now when it presented itself to her she put it away quickly and almost angrily, as something not to be contemplated. It dishonoured him, she said to herself, to admit for a moment that he should in such a manner deceive her. So she sat still for awhile with the fear of his unfaithfulness thrusting itself upon her and growing stronger, and with her thoughts turning more and more to the real nature of this reckless adventure upon which she had launched.

Somehow there in the darkness and the loneliness it did not seem quite so alluring as it had done while she was at home. The thought of her mother and her father and of George brought even a sharper pang to her spirit as she reflected upon their feelings when the truth should be made known. She began to have half a hope that Clayton indeed would not

keep tryst; and while she thought thus she heard a carriage coming. Then the notion of repentance vanished from her mind, and with flushed cheek and fast-beating heart she rose to greet her lover.

It was not he. The carriage passed swiftly through the Gap, and as it went by she heard a man and a woman talking as they rode.

Many minutes had been spent now in waiting. "It must be much past seven," she said, and she had an impulse to go home. But again she took a seat upon the stone and listened.

Suddenly the thought came to her that she might have misread Clayton's letter. This did not seem possible, but she would examine the letter. From the dust-grimed window of the grist-mill near by a faint light shone—the light in the watchman's room. Abby took the crumpled letter from her pocket and came close to the window. With difficulty she read it, and perceived that the letter was dated on Tuesday and asked her to meet him "to-morrow," that is, on Wednesday.

Her mind was in such confusion and tumult that a strong effort of her will was required to permit her fully to grasp the truth, which was that, carelessly, she had permitted herself to be controlled by her first impression that "to-morrow" was Thursday, the day after the letter had come to her.

She crushed the paper in her hands and slowly walked back into the road. Clayton had been here last night and had waited for her. She sat down again to consider the situation. A faint hope lingered with her that he would guess why she had not met him and would return upon this night. She would wait still for a little while. The thought that oppressed her until it almost prostrated her was of Clayton's disappointment. He must have suffered much because of the loss of her companion-

ship, and more because he surely believed her faithless to him.

Then, when flight with him had become impossible, she found herself longing for it. All the hideousness of that proceeding had vanished, and her love discerned in it allurements and ecstacies that had not before presented themselves to her fancy. It was clear to her that if Clayton should come now she would make for him without a pang, but joyfully, the amazing sacrifice he had demanded of her.

But still there was not wanting to her soul the still small voice that whispered to her in this hour of desperation and bitterness that a loving Power had lifted her out of the entanglement which had been thrown around her feet and had put them once again upon the way that might lead her back to honour and self-respect.

The darkness fell deep upon field and forest and rushing rivulet while she sat there, and still Clayton did not come.

"He will not come," she said, rising and trying to look about her. "I shall never see him again."

Then suddenly the blackness of the glen became terrible, and the plashing of the stream, heard alone amid the deep silence of the place, seemed like a confusion of voices mocking her. Dread came upon her, and turning she started with rapid steps upward along the road that led to the church.

It was a sharp ascent and soon she was almost breathless. Now, as she came near to the hillside burying-ground, the swarming gravestones had a new and ghastly whiteness. In the deep darkness they alone could be seen. She would hurry by, and despite her fatigue she quickened her pace.

She had not noticed that the stars were hidden and that all the sky was covered by cloud, but before she had come up to the level of the church and turned

the corner into the Radnor road, facing homeward, rain began to fall. She had an impulse to find refuge in the church porch until the shower should pass; but she remembered that the time was growing late, and that she must at any hazard reach Connock and her house before her father and mother should return. She resolved to press forward.

Then the rain fell more and more heavily, and all the thick dust of the highway turned to grey mud which clung to her shoes and her skirts, while her bonnet and her frock were soon saturated with water.

She was weary and faint and half-crying, but she stumbled onward with a kind of fierce wild energy, fearful that even yet her misconduct would be discovered, and wondering, with her brain in a whirl of excitement and panic, in what manner she could account to her mother for her condition and her strange behaviour. More than once she thought she would just fling herself down by the roadside and perish there; but then to perish is not so easy, and she knew that to linger would be to destroy all hope of saving her good name.

So she went forward still while the storm became more violent. Presently she heard, close behind her, the sound of carriage-wheels, and the light from the lamps upon the dashboard flared through the raindrops and upon the wet earth behind her.

The driver of the horse saw her and hailed her. She drew herself aside and put her head down. She would rather not be spoken to even by a stranger. But the man in the carriage was persistent in his kindness. He stopped beside her, and leaping out he insisted that Abby should get in with him.

As soon as he touched the earth she knew that it was Dr. Ponder, and when she looked about at him he recognized her.

"Bless my soul, Abby, is it you!" he exclaimed. "Why, my dear, get right in and let me drive you home."

Then he lifted her into the carriage and seated himself by her side. "Now," she thought, "exposure and disgrace are sure. What should she say to Dr. Ponder? Nothing, it appeared. Dr. Ponder was more than willing to do all the talking.

"Abby, my child, how *did* you contrive to get away out here on the hills on such a night? It is really terrible for you to be so far from home in the rain and the darkness. You lost your way, of course. I have so often protested against the practice you young women have of taking long walks by yourselves on these lonely roads, particularly in the late afternoon. How fortunate for you that I happened to overtake you and to see you! Are you wet? Why, my dear, it is dreadful! Here, throw this lap-robe about your shoulders."

Abby murmured thanks.

"I think it is but a shower, after all," continued Dr. Ponder. "It will be over quickly; and, at any rate, we shall soon be at home. Your father and mother will be worried about you. I am really glad to have a companion for the rest of this dreary drive. I have been over to Radnor to attend service at St. David's church—a church consecrated by the memories of a hundred and fifty years. Have you ever been there, my dear?"

"Yes," said Abby, faintly.

"Isn't it a lovely place? And the church edifice is so quaint! Ah! my beloved child, how I wish you and your dear parents could see the light with respect to church matters! You have never had an impulse to look into them, have you?"

"No!" whispered Abby, shivering.

"And that is the only reason why so many good

people who really in their hearts want to do right miss the opportunity. To the candid mind the argument is conclusive that there is really but one true church, with an apostolic priesthood of unbroken descent and holding as a sacred trust the faith once delivered to the Saints. That is our Church, with a consecrated, divinely-inspired ministry, speaking with authority, clothed with almost supernatural powers, and alone warranted in interpreting the Divine Will to the people. But people will not permit candour to control their minds; that is the trouble. Ears have they and hear not; eyes have they and see not. They are in spiritual darkness and ignorance. But your young mind, dear Abby, surely it is not closed to the truth?"

"No," said Abby, faintly.

"Take, for example, the sacraments," continued Dr. Ponder, earnestly, as he touched his horse with the whip. "The Friends look upon them wholly from the spiritual side and so in fact reject them; but is it not the truth, Abby, that—— Perhaps, however, you do not care to have the truth explained here and now? You are weary and uncomfortable. Shall I go on with my talk upon the subject, or shall we wait until—— ?"

"Go on, please!" responded Abby, who was by no means displeased that the doctor, instead of feeling curious about her presence on that lonely road, in the thick darkness and the storm, should have his mind diverted wholly to one of his favourite subjects for discussion. "Go on, if you will. I am much in need of instruction."

"In much need, in truth," said the doctor, who thereupon with a kind of joyousness began a sermon that lasted until he had crossed the river and mounted the Connock hill and halted at the parsonage gate.

"But I should have stopped before your gate," said the doctor. "I was so much engaged in this interesting subject that really I forgot about you."

"I will get out here," said Abby; and seeing Mrs. Ponder standing in the doorway, with the lighted hall behind her, she added, and stop a moment with Friend Ponder."

"Do!" answered the doctor, "while I return the horse to the livery stable. I found her lost in the storm, my dear," called the doctor to Mrs. Ponder, "and brought her safely home."

Abby would much rather have gone to the grey house at once, but she could not avoid speaking with Mrs. Ponder, who regarded with amazement her bedraggled condition. Abby felt that she could not withstand questioning from the minister's wife. Upon the slightest pressure she was sure she should fall upon her knees, bury her face in that good woman's dress and make full confession of her fault.

But Mrs. Ponder, though surprised and curious, did not inquire closely. Being very shrewd, and knowing of Clayton's sudden disappearance, she may have guessed that Abby had been away somewhere to meet him or to say farewell to him; and besides, she had in her possession, and now withdrew from her pocket, a letter directed in Clayton's handwriting to Abby. This she gave to Abby, saying:

"It reached me to-day, my dear, with a note asking me to give it to you."

The colour came sharply into Abby's face as she took the letter, and again the impulse was strong upon her to tell the whole pitiful story to Mrs. Ponder. But that lady said to her:

"And now, my dear, while I should dearly love to have you stay with me, I think it would be wise for you to go into your own home and quickly put

on dry clothing. You can tell me all about it another time; how you happened to lose your way, and how Dr. Ponder fortunately found you."

Then she kissed the girl good-night, and Abby, clasping the letter tightly in her hand, hurried to her house and went in at the front door. Her parents had not yet returned, and she had, she thought, at least an hour in which to make ready for their coming.

But before she would remove one of her wet garments, she would read Clayton's letter. Closing the door of her bedroom and lighting a candle she tore open the envelope, and standing by her bureau she read:

"You are right, my precious Abby! I sinned against you in asking you to leave your home and your mother with a man who, after all, may not be free. Good-bye, my love! I will harass you no longer with my miserable life! In three days I shall be in the Confederate army. I hope to find death there!"

Abby's eyes were brimming with tears before she could read the letter through. She brushed them away and read it over and over again.

"Poor Clayton!" she exclaimed, when she put the letter down upon the bureau and began to undress. "He thinks I have forsaken him! I have driven him to death. I know he will die in battle, and all because of my carelessness!"

She was weeping all the while she put herself in dry and warm garments, and then she flung herself upon the bed to reflect, to cry, and to pray—to pray for herself and for the lover who was now lost to her forever. In her forlornness and weariness and desolation she fell asleep; and after awhile her mother came softly in. The candle was almost burned out. By it lay the open letter, which Rachel

had read before she had a thought that it was important.

Then putting out the light, the mother, with a new and heavier sorrow upon her heart, withdrew from the room, quietly closing the door so that Abby should not know she had been there.

In the morning Abby awoke without having changed her position upon the bed during all the night. As soon as she had full consciousness she leaped to the floor and hurried to the bureau. The letter seemed to have been untouched. Had her mother seen it? Abby guessed she had, but in any case she could not doubt that her mother would see and be worried about the pallid and haggard face the girl must bring to the breakfast table.

When Rachel greeted her as she came downstairs, Abby was sure that her mother had seen the letter, and sure also that she would not speak of it no matter what was the measure of her sorrow.

Abby went about her household duties in the usual way, but when the morning was nearly spent, and Rachel, her tasks completed, sat in the rocking-chair in the sitting room with sadness upon her face, Abby came to her, and kneeling by her put her head upon her mother's knee as she had been used to do in her childhood, and began to sob. Still Rachel said nothing, but she stroked the girl's hair with a gentle hand and leaned over to kiss her forehead.

"Thee saw it mother, I know," said Abby with her face still hidden.

"The letter, thee means? Yes, dear, I saw it, and I read it without thinking it was thine own."

"And thee forgives me mother?"

"I do not know what there is to forgive," she answered. "Has thee loved this man?"

"Yes, mother."

"And he wished thee to marry him?"

"Yes."

"He is not worthy of thee, my dear. There is not clear honesty in his face, I think. Father and I long have hoped thee would love George."

"I know it mother, but it seems as if I cannot."

"We cannot always control our feelings, I know, dear Abby, and yet George is so good a man and he is a Friend, and I am sure he loves thee dearly."

"I am not fit to be his wife."

"Did this man invite thee to dishonour thyself and thy parents by running away with him?"

"Yes."

"That is the proof that he is unworthy. And thee would not go although thee had strong affection for him. I am sure thee would not. It would have been the very bitterness of death for thy father and for me. God gave thee grace to resist that temptation."

Poor Abby could not tell the whole truth to her mother. To do so, she felt, would be to wound her almost as much as if she nad indeed flown with Clayton.

"What did the man mean, my child, by saying he may not be free?"

Abby, her head lifted, but with her face turned away from Rachel's, felt her cheeks crimson with shame. She thought she could not answer that awful question; and Rachel did not repeat it. But in the silence that followed it seemed to Abby that not to answer it at all might be more dreadful than to tell the truth. She turned quickly, and hiding her face again in her mother's lap, she said:

"He is already married."

It was a frightful avowal to make. She shuddered as she uttered the words, and Rachel was as if a sword had pierced her soul. But the mother

was used to mastering her spirit, and she would not now probe deep into Abby's confidence lest the girl should be put to fresh confusion. Much she would have liked to know when Abby first learned that Clayton was not free, but she dreaded to ask that question. So after silence for a moment she said:

"And now, my poor child, the man has gone, and I hope forever. It was base for him to disturb thy young and pure life with his wicked plotting; but thee will see him no more."

Abby actually felt her soul protesting against her mother's words of harshness for Clayton; but she only said:

"I suppose not, mother," and she began again to weep.

"It may be," said Rachel, "that he will survive the war and after awhile come back to thee. Thee will promise me not to receive him?"

"I promise I will not, mother."

"Even if he should then be free? For, my dearest, if he could lawfully marry thee, such a man surely would wreck thy life."

"Mother," said Abby, "I will not marry him even if I might do so. My life is already wrecked. I shall have peace no more."

"Not so, my dear," said Rachel, taking Abby's hand and lifting her up to sit upon the chair beside her mother. "Thee will try to conquer thy feeling for the man, and thee will conquer it; and that thee may do so victoriously thee needs to ask for Divine help and to pray that the Inner Light may shine more brightly in thy soul. It is they that come out of great tribulation that are truly God's people, and thy great tribulation has come to thee early in thy life in this passion which brought thee into peril from which God has given thee wonderful deliverance."

Then Abby went to her room more sure than ever that her love for Clayton would never know abatement, and reproaching herself for concealment from her mother of her wild adventure of yesterday.

The next day she was greeted by two painful revelations. Her father came home with a sad face to tell his wife and daughter that his furnace had chilled.

In the evening Mrs. Ponder sent for Abby to come over to the parsonage. The girl found her weeping, and for some moments the minister's wife could hardly utter the strange message she had for her. When at last she could command her feelings, she informed Abby that a letter had just come to her from her heart-broken sister at Sassafras telling that Dolly had fled with Dr. Ramsay and covered all her family with shame.

Abby went away with white face to spend the night in sleeplessness.

CHAPTER XVII

ISAAC WOOLFORD GOES TO A FAR COUNTRY

WHEN a blast-furnace "chills" all the molten and half-molten mass of iron-ore, limestone and coal, in process of transmutation by chemical magic, solidifies and stands there filling every crevice and cranny of the stack an inert, immovable lump of material which can be rent asunder and dislodged only by the force of violent explosives. The operation is costly of removing in its hardened form the stuffs which in their semi-fluid state are so easily changed by combustion and gravitation. Many thousands of dollars must be expended before the stack will be ready again for reducing the oxides of iron to the metallic state.

The chilling of Isaac Woolford's furnace, therefore, meant death to all his hopes that he would reach the point where he could do successful business. With the blasts in full operation and all the processes of smelting moving along without let or hindrance, Isaac barely kept himself from bankruptcy. Now, at least ten thousand dollars would be required before he could make another ton of iron, and it was clear to him that he had reached the end of his career as an iron-maker; clear indeed that, unless miraculous good fortune should come to him from some unsuspected quarter, he would never be able to pay his debts.

This, then, was the achievement of a life spent in ceaseless industry, in patient striving, in persistent hopefulness: he entered upon old age a poorer man than when he began; he moved toward

the time of helplessness with no reserve fund for maintenance, and his continuous purpose to engage in fair-dealing had issued in the imposition of a burden of debt he could not pay. There was but one gleam of light in the darkness: in permitting his mind to go over his career he could perceive that he had blundered often, but he could not remember that he had ever wilfully wronged any man of the value of a dollar. Some comfort for his own soul there was in that reflection, but not enough to overcome the heart-ache which the humiliation of failure and the dread of penniless old age for himself and suffering for his wife and daughter brought to him.

He went to his office still day after day, for there were some things of small moment to be done and habit was strong upon him, but he framed no plans for continuance. He would not ask George to venture any more money in the business. He felt indeed that he could not consent if George should volunteer to do so. The business was ended. The door was shut. Hope had departed.

What he should do next he did not know nor could he bring himself to consider. The springs of action had lost all their force. He was like a man benumbed. It was of no use to try again, for how many times had he tried while still his soul was buoyant with hope and all the power of his younger manhood was with him? and always he had failed. In his bitterness he was almost like saying that a curse had been set upon him; but he would not do that. His soul was reverent even if it was sometimes inclined to be rebellious. No doubt some wise purpose was behind the causes that impelled him to defeat; he was willing to confess that spiritual discipline might be more likely to come from failure than from success; but if

this were fully admitted, in what manner should the fact bring gratification to his creditors, and how should it supply him and his beloved ones with shelter and bread as the years go on and the almond-tree begins to flourish ?

Isaac crept up the hill towards his home evening after evening pondering these things in his heart, and finding the steep ascent of the Connock street harder and harder as the days went by and the burdened soul reacted on the worn body. Then, one day, he felt as if he should like to stay at home and rest himself for a few hours. He was very tired. Mind and body alike were tired ; and the little business that remained to him could wait for another day. He dawdled about the house and the garden, and though the weight upon his heart was not lifted, and the loving wife and sweet affectionate daughter had sorrow for him written upon their faces, he did find some sort of gentle pleasure in his idleness and in the company of his dear ones.

On the next day he was not well, and he resolved that he would do wisely to remain at home. When the evening came his condition was so unusual that Rachel would send Abby to bring the doctor, and the doctor told him to stay in bed on the following morning. Isaac went to bed that night for the last time. Before the week was out he had failed so far that the physician had secret fear of fatal results. The patient found in his own soul presentiment that he should not recover. The strain had been too great. The silver cord was loosening. The heart of man cannot for ever resist the crushing blows of misfortune. This man's spirit was broken. He could strive no more ; he could endure no longer.

Except for the parting from his wife and his girl he would have greeted with exultation the prospect of release. As it was, he looked straight before

him into the Valley of Shadows with a kind of tranquil sadness. Religious hope he had, and it brought to his soul serenity. Just what lay beyond in that strange mystery land of which we think so much and know so little he could not fully understand, but he was well assured that it would have peace for him, and peace he most passionately coveted. Sometimes, lying alone in the sick chamber and thinking of all the tumult and tragedy of the life that lay behind him, he turned his thought toward that Fair Country where the weary are at rest, and laughed quietly to himself while he contemplated the joy that he believed was awaiting him. No more money troubles; no more trafficking; no more losing bargains; no more roaring furnaces; no more wrangling with labourers; no more harsh words from disappointed creditors; no more sorrow or pain or crying; no more fatigue, no more distress; just sweet, alluring, satisfying, everlasting peace. A sharp pang came to him now and then as he thought of the wife of his youth left behind and of Abby; but he was helpless, and to worry were useless. He could not open his heart fully even to beloved Rachel. Always he had been an inarticulate man, unable to voice his deeper feeling; and so now, when he spoke to Rachel of his departure, he could but kiss her and stroke her hair and say to her:

"It will be hard for thee, dearest, but thee will not suffer long, my Rachel. God will give thee to me once more in that better country; and while thee waits the summons thee will find a helper in George."

And to Abby he said:

"Thee has been a good child to me, dear Abigail. God bless thee my daughter, and bring thee to me again when thy call shall come."

So when the weeks had sped away and the frail

body became more frail, the farewells had all been said, and one night while Rachel clasped his hand and watched him she felt the hand grow cold, as the heart-beat gently ceased, and Isaac, like a child falling into happy slumber, drifted out and away to the spirit land.

Rachel thought him beautiful as he lay there with the sweet face, the small aquiline nose, the grey eyebrows, the sensitive mouth and the thick and soft white hair tossed about his head. She saw him in her memory as he had been in the far past when his hair was brown; always handsome and gentle; always with refinement and high breeding in face and manner; always since she knew him the gentleman. the true lover, the faithful husband, the devout follower of Christ; and as she looked and remembered and the waves of desolation poured in upon her soul, now so lonely and sorrowful, she found in her heart a longing desire to make haste to follow him into that City of God which hath foundations.

And Abby gazed into the white face and thanked God again and again that He had not permitted her in her madness and folly to put a still heavier burden of suffering upon this father who had suffered so much. "How dreadful it would be," she thought, "if I were far away and mother were here alone with no one to comfort her"; and then Abby tried to resolve more firmly than ever that she would keep her promise to sever the tie that bound her to Clayton.

George was the first to call when Isaac's death was made known, and Mrs. Ponder was eager to give consolation and friendly help in the things that must be done even while grief is most poignant.

The arrangements for the burial were made by George, and the day was set.

It was a grey day, warm with the warmth of the

end of May and with the trees putting out their leaf-buds and the grass showing green in the gardens and on both sides of the flagged foot pavements.

The attendance was large. Many friends came up in the train from the city, and from all the country side the members of Plymouth Meeting drove into Connock to pay the last debt of courtesy to the man who had been called away. The streets by the grey house were thronged by carriages, from which broad-hatted men helped women in plain attire to alight, and when the horses had been hitched to a tree or left in the care of the hired men who drove them, the Friends entered the house until at last it was crowded and overflowed upon the porch and into the garden.

The body of the dead man lay in the coffin in the long north parlour. The shutters were nearly closed, so that the room seemed dark even to those who came from the light of the clouded day. There was a heavy odour of flowers and women in Friends' dress clustered in the ends of the room where chairs had been placed. Neighbours and visitors from afar came continuously in long procession through the great double door of the parlour, then walked around the coffin, gazed for a moment upon the tranquil face upturned from the satin cushion, and moved slowly from the room.

Outside, on the front porch, were half a dozen groups of men, some of them Friends, most of them townspeople who had known Isaac. Many were standing, a few sat upon or leaned against the railing of the porch; others had chairs. Their countenances were set for gravity, but upon the whole cheerfulness was not completely suppressed. The talk was low-toned, but it was of politics and of the crops and of the drift of the war and of the advancing price of gold, and sometimes about Isaac Woolford.

"Does he leave anything?" asked Peter Ruddick up at the end of the porch where he could spit comfortably over the railing.

"Not much, I am afraid," answered William Conly from the armchair tilted back against the wall of the house. "Things have gone hard with Isaac since the furnace chilled."

"George has most of it, I reckon," said Thomas Shorter. "He backed Isaac heavily, and a man always has to pay for that."

"George never fails to take care of George," said Peter. "But I must say he is a good fellow."

"If he marries the girl it will come out even," observed Mr. Shorter.

"Yes," said Conly. "If! But it has looked for a good while as if she wouldn't have him."

"A pity, too," said Shorter, "for his sake and for hers, particularly if Isaac's estate has gone to pieces."

Two new men came into the group, and the discussion of Isaac's affairs began over again. Peter Ruddick improved the chance, while his companions' backs were turned, to climb over the railing and to go to his store by way of the side gate. He had paid the debt of neighbourliness by showing himself at the house and that was enough, he thought. Thomas Shorter, under pretence of gauging the weather by a glance at the sky, went out to the front grass-plot and ran his eye over the house and the garden for the hundredth time. He wanted such a place, and he had long hoped this one might be offered for sale.

All the groups upon the porch and upon the grass made guesses about the condition of Isaac's estate and the future of the widow and George's chances with Abby. More than one of them thought the widow might give up housekeeping, and considered what, in that case, they would be willing

to bid on Isaac's buggy or Isaac's horses or upon his double sleigh.

If a man could foresee and forehear the movements and the talk at his funeral he would have a lovely lesson in humility. We think our fellows think so much of us, and we take our own estimate of ourselves as the representative of their estimate, and so we swell our pride. Then, when they come to pay their last tribute and to stand among the mourners, curiosity and covetousness and a little smothered exultation that death has spared them fill their minds.

The neighbours do care that a good man has gone away, but why should they be expected to care much? The conclusion was foregone; the heavy burdens of their own lives remain with them. Sorrow has been in their homes and love has had tears that no neighbourly feeling can summon. Men are dying all about them; death is commonplace excepting when it strikes into the home circle, and the fountains of feeling cannot be tapped continuously. Isaac is dead, but the survivors must go on still, and going on means trade and war and politics and work. Isaac's house and horses and carriages remain. Somebody must have them. If they are to be sold, may I not have an eye to them and a thought for them, even while I am sorry he has gone and breathe a sigh or two for the widow and the orphan? The preacher within the house is speaking of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. I know about that already; but there must be bread and butter and shelter even if life have brevity; and besides, to Peter Ruddick, for example, the death of Isaac Woolford seems the most ordinary and usual of happenings. The thing that seems extraordinary, unusual, startling, stupendous and very, very far away is

the death of Peter Ruddick. He would rather not think about that until he is older, much older. The paternal Ruddick died at eighty-seven and Peter is but sixty-two. When the thought of the end *will* force itself upon Peter's reluctant mind he always regards father as a precedent, and, mentally subtracting 62 from 87, counts that he still has twenty-five full years to make ready in. Meantime, a horse-trade now and then may be useful.

In the house, the broad hallway is lined on both sides with people who are quiet, or who speak in whispers. Men and women sit upon the stairs. The dining-room and the sitting-room on the south side of the hall are filled. Upstairs, in their own chamber, sit Rachel and Abby, not in mourning dress, but sad and weeping, with deep grief at the heart. About them cluster their nearest kin. George is in the adjoining room with the relatives not so near, and other kinsfolk and dear friends are in the rooms on the other side of the house. Here there is perfect silence. Below there is no noise and no movement, excepting that the undertaker, clad in sombre garb, and having a queer mingling of gloom and business eagerness in his face, goes hither and thither, half upon tip-toe, giving whispered directions. It is surprising how many persons he must speak to, and equally surprising how much satisfaction is found in their momentary importance by two or three of Isaac's friends who have agreed to help.

Some of the people feared there would be no speaking, but after awhile the shrill voice of a woman was heard from the second story hall. In a kind of high recitative, without inflection, she prayed briefly and monotonously for grace for all the company there gathered in the house of mourning. The end of the petition came abruptly, as

when water is cut off without a dribble by the swift closing of a faucet.

The silence seemed deeper than it had done before she spoke. Then another woman's voice was heard from the landing upon the staircase. It was soft and tender and lovely like the flute-stop of an organ. One listened, and in one's mind figured the woman's face as of angelic beauty. She spoke with perfect grace and perfect fluency, and the message was of peace to the souls of those that were desolate and of gentle warning to others not to neglect the pleadings of that Spirit whose very nature is Love.

There was a glimpse of heaven while the music of that voice was heard, and Abby felt that she would be glad if no more were said; but at once a man without the room began to speak. His opening words were those of prayer, but soon he seemed to forget that prayer had been his purpose, and he turned to reminiscences of his long acquaintance with Isaac. These involved a number of interesting transactions, some of them so far removed from sentiment as the borrowing of a set of buggy-harness and what "Isaac said" and what "I said," before and after the event. At last the speaker, still forgetful of his intention to pray, diverged to a little sermon upon the awfulness of death and upon the positive certainty that the Friends' way of getting ready for it is the only way deserving of attention from reasonable beings

Silence fell again, and then the undertaker whispered that the people had better go. Some of them lingered to take another look at Isaac's face, but soon all were gone, and then Rachel and Abby came down with the relatives and friends and the procession moved slowly toward Plymouth.

There in the grassy burial ground they gathered

about the grave, and there beneath the sycamore trees, in silence, they gave the body to its mother earth. No word was said, no bell was tolled, no hymn was sung, but the wife and the daughter turned away from the grave and crept into the carriage again to return to the home which had become desolate.

Isaac left no will, and so at the request of Rachel, and equipped with authority by the County Court, George Fotherly undertook the ungrateful task of disposing of the estate to the creditors. The furnace was taken over by a group of men to whom Isaac was indebted, and there was good promise that, by an investment of new money, it could be made profitable. With it went the Ridge tract when George's mortgage had been satisfied, and some other pieces of property were disposed of until nothing was left but the grey house, which had been pledged to George. He would have been glad to forego all claim to it, but Rachel would not hear of that. She insisted that she could pay interest on the debt, of which it may be said Abby knew nothing.

After taking counsel with George and with certain wise Friends who were anxious to help her, Rachel resolved that she would maintain herself by taking boarders. She had a charming home for the right kind of people, and there could be no trouble in filling the house with members of her own religious society. Friends always stand by one another, and if she had been willing many right hands (the left hands not admitted to the secret) would have brought help to her in generous measure. But there would be help enough, she thought, in a throng of boarders who should find comfort and delight in so good a lodging place in so lovely a situation.

But, before all her plans were made, and before

the house had new inmates, an attractive offer came to Abby and it must have serious consideration.

As soon as the war began, streams of runaway slaves began to pour across the Potomac river into Maryland, whence the current swept upward into Pennsylvania. But many of the negroes, usually the most torpid and helpless, lingered in Maryland, and among these were many children.

The Quaker, hating human slavery, had always had a quick sense of obligation to its black victims, and had never failed to strive to meet the obligation fully. And so, very early in the war time, and while yet there were no other benevolences provided for the forlorn multitude of the fugitive negroes, the Friends began the work of caring for them.

One little instrument for bringing help to the blacks was a school for young negro children begun in Sharpsburg, Maryland, not far from the Potomac. It had backing from a Quaker family in that town, and it had approval and money help from Friends in Pennsylvania. The first teacher had not succeeded very well, and when the friends of the school came to cast about for her successor, some one suggested Abby's name, and the place was offered to her.

There was sorrowful talk about it in the grey house when the letter came. The mother yearned over the only loved one left to her, and Abby's heart was heavy as she thought of separation and of Rachel's loneliness. But the promised salary was not of mean dimensions, and a nice home was provided in the house of the Cleggs who had started the school and were members of the Society of Friends.

George Fotherly's advice was asked, and his wish was that Abby should not go; but he could not be urgent that his way should be approved, for he dared not offer to Rachel the financial help he

would have given joyfully, and he knew that the burden upon the mother would probably be lightened if the daughter could provide for herself and have a small surplus at the end of the year. But George could promise to go with Abby to the Maryland town and to help her to overcome her first feeling of loneliness, while he should see the place and the people and the school and bring back to the mother in Connock something to comfort and assure her.

So, then, Abby accepted the offer that she should become a teacher—and Rachel summoned to the grey house for companionship and help her widowed sister, who had been living in lodgings and to whom Connock was as attractive as the great city.

With warnings and good counsel from the mother and strong promises and many words of love from the daughter and abundant tears from both, the parting was made, and with George by her side the long journey was begun. It was for him a day of much happiness, despite the fact that separation from the woman he loved was near. There was joy in the spending of the whole day in her company, and he was so kind, so thoughtful, so eager to dispel her gloomy thoughts and his love shone so brightly in his face and in his conduct, that Abby, long before the journey was ended, had in her heart a little glow of gratitude which once she would have thought meant love.

There was no discontentment in the hearts of the travellers when they had tarried for awhile in the Clegg homestead and had felt the warmth of the welcome from the sweet Quaker woman and the venerable Quaker man who formed the household. George was reassured. He should have a pleasant story to take back to Rachel, and Abby felt that if she could escape homesickness anywhere away from Connock it would be in this place of peace.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SCHOOL-HOUSE

THE house in which the Cleggs lived was of stone, with a portico upon the front, and with all the woodwork shining with white paint so bright that it might have been freshly laid. The windows in the two stories had heavy wooden shutters upon the outside, and were screened within by grey-coloured slatted blinds. The roof was crowned by a railed platform which was also white. The house was double, with wide rooms on either side of a spacious hall. It stood forty feet or more from the street. In front of it there was a lawn dotted by flower-beds, and groups of trees were gathered at the ends of the building, so that when Abby and George opened the gate and came up the gravelled path to the front door the house seemed to be fairly framed in green. Within as without there was beauty with simplicity. The art of the cultivated Quaker is to attain loveliness with as little help as may be possible from ornament.

The dwellers in this solid and charming home were two Quakers for whom such a living-place seemed exactly fit. Thomas Clegg and his wife Tacy were Friends of a strict type in dress, speech and conduct. The Light had shined in upon them long ago and taught them that the higher things, with all they cost in attainment, are the best things, but that the world has among its perishable things many that need not be despised. It had always been their plan to put the spiritual life and its

requirements first, and then to find pleasure in all the physical life affords that does not retard the movement towards spiritual development.

They were quiet people with quiet pleasures, and yet Abby thought she found cheerfulness, if not joyfulness, the characteristic of the family life. Friend Tacy was a little woman with a bright, merry face looking out from the cap that came down about her cheeks, and she was always fond of a jest and a smile. Her husband was more grave, but he laughed with her, and sometimes joked with her, and Abby saw at once that Tacy's lightness and brightness and sweet cheery talk were to him the most pleasant things in life.

Evidently there was large prosperity for these two good Friends. With it came contentment. In Abby's home the business troubles of her father had always weighed heavily upon him and made him incline to sadness, and her mother's natural gravity had been deepened by the share of trouble that must be borne by her. Until Abby came into the household of the Cleggs and found how well mirthfulness and joyousness may be fitted to holiness of life and of behaviour, she had not realized in what degree the atmosphere of the grey house had been made sombre by the dispositions as well as the misfortunes of its inmates.

Here, then, she found influences which tended to make the weight of her sorrow less, and to tranquillize her spirit. She felt, as soon as she entered the door and looked at the dear little Quakeress who flung her arms about the girl's neck and gave her a welcoming kiss, that she should love this house and its inmates and find in their companionship sweet peace.

Before George should go home with comforting news to the anxious mother in Connock he would

see the school-house, and thither he went that very afternoon with Friend Tacy and Abby.

"Now," said Tacy as they walked briskly down the street, "thee must not expect too much. Has thee thy mind fixed upon some great building of marble and with Corinthian columns and carved work? Thee must unfix it, then, and do so quickly, or the shock will be too severe when thee sees the edifice."

Abby laughed and said:

"Really I have no great expectations."

"No," continued Tacy, "for thee will have no scholars but little bits of pickaninnies, all black as coal, and a fine house would scare them. They could not keep their minds on the spelling-book and the Rule of Three. Thee will teach the Rule of Three, won't thee?"

"I don't know," said Abby. "I must find out how much they know. We can't begin there, can we?"

"No, and I fear the last teacher did not bring them anywhere near to it," said Tacy.

The school-house was a wooden cabin, shingled and nicely painted, containing one room with desks and chairs, and, on a low platform, a chair and a table for the teacher. It was clean and comfortable and entirely suitable, and Abby was satisfied with it. She was particularly pleased to find that it stood at the border of a wood just at the edge of the town, and that upon three sides of it was a grassy common whereon the children could play.

George went homeward in the morning, and Abby was almost surprised to find herself already upon such terms with Friend Tacy that she could part with George without feeling that he was leaving her with strangers.

She plunged at once into her work. The sc[illegible]l

had a score of negro children, blowsy, ragged and noisy, and without a ray of light in their minds. They were ignorant, but not stupid. They wanted to learn, they were obedient and tractable, and it was plain enough that they liked the new teacher at once. It could not have been in the nature of any child, however ill-born and sullen, to fail to love that sweet face turned from the little platform day after day upon these outcast members of a forlorn and despised race.

Abby found the work delightful. She felt all her woman nature go out in pity for these poor little creatures committed to her care, and she experienced a kind of exhilaration as she found her knowledge being imparted to their minds and gaining lodgment there. It seemed almost as if she were giving up part of herself to enrich them and to lift them up from their low estate, and the sacrifice seemed joyful to her. As the children made headway her interest in them deepened, and more earnestly she tried to impart to them not alone the little shreds of learning in the books, but some notion of the divine things, and of the meaning of the words character and conduct. They were too young for her to go at all beyond the first things in religion, but the teacher thought a way had been found for her to let a glimmer of the light shine in upon their minds.

Thus Abby found for herself at last a good measure of peace. Her thoughts were diverted from herself; new sources of interest were opened, and in service for those that were helpless and wretched she found a kind of happiness. She learned that the sure medicine for the heartache is to try to alleviate the sufferings of others, and that the ministry of helpfulness is the open door to blessedness.

Love for Clayton was still in Abby's heart, and

sometimes when she thought of him and of the impassable barrier now erected between them, her sorrow came to her again with dreadful force; but most of the time she succeeded in mastering her spirit; while she strove to concentrate her thought on her work and to do it diligently, delighting meanwhile in the companionship of the Cleggs. For the first time since Clayton came into her life, she had tranquillity.

Thus half the summer passed away, and the end of July was near with a promise, it seemed to Abby, that her peace would no more be disturbed.

Late in July, George Fotherly was summoned by a concern of business to visit Hagerstown, in Maryland, at the upper end of the Cumberland Valley, and when he had completed his errand he could not refuse himself the pleasure of going over to Sharpsburg, but a few miles distant, to visit Abby. He reached that town in the afternoon and went at once to the house of the Cleggs, thinking to meet Abby there; but she had not yet returned from school.

He resolved then to seek for her, and with Friend Tacy Clegg accompanying him, he went toward the school-house.

Less than an hour before his arrival at the village, Abby, having completed all the lessons for the day, had gathered her pupils about her and was speaking to them a few words of admonition before dismissing them. In the midst of her talk she looked up, and there, in the open doorway, directly across the room from her, she saw Clayton Harley. He was in citizen's dress, with a slouched hat the brim of which was turned up from his face. He removed the hat, and bowed low to Abby, saying, "Good-afternoon!"

Abby was so startled by the apparition that she

felt as if she could not command her speech or her movements. She thought she should swoon. But making a strong effort, she told the children to go home, and rising from her chair, she moved with them toward the door.

Clayton entered the room and stood by one of the desks, and it was in Abby's thought to pass him by, with perhaps a word of greeting, and following the scholars to the street, to speed homeward without further conversation with Clayton. But he would not have it so.

He came near to the door again, and partly barring the way, put out his hand and said:

"Have you no welcome for me, Abby?"

The girl refused the hand, and drawing back, answered: "I may not meet with thee any more."

She was so unnerved and distracted that she must needs find a seat. She could no longer stand. She retreated to the platform and sat in her teacher's chair. Clayton shut the door and came nearer to her, leaning upon one of the desks. He was surprised and troubled by her treatment of him.

"I am sent upon a mission to this region," he said. "I knew you were here, and I could not endure that I should not see you. May I not clasp your hand, my Abby?"

"No, thee must not!" replied the girl.

"You love me no more?"

"I cannot answer thee."

"You hate me," said Clayton sadly, "because I asked you to fly with me. I beg you to forgive that act of folly. I am glad you did not come to me."

"No!" said Abby, "I do not hate thee, but I have promised my mother I would receive thee no more. Thee must go away from me. Oh, please do not compel me to break my promise!"

"I will not," answered Clayton. 'But how can I conquer my great love for you, or forget how much you have loved me in the past?"

'We must both forget it," said Abby. "It was a great sin against God. Since my dear father's death it has seemed to me more terrible than ever."

"Is your father dead, poor girl?"

"Yes, and that is why I am here, trying to make my own living."

Clayton looked about the room rather scornfully.

"If your friends truly cared for you, they might have found something better for you to do than to teach a lot of little niggers."

Abby was angry. Her face flushed as she said:

"Thee will not talk to me in that way, please."

"I ask pardon," said Clayton, humbly. "I am glad of anything that has enabled me once more to see your face."

"Thee is in the Confederate army, is thee not? Then what right has thee to be here?"

"I have been wounded, and I came home to recover."

Abby's cheeks whitened and she shuddered.

"Wounded? And thee is well again?"

"It was but a small matter. I shall be in the army again in a day or two."

"Thee is in peril while thee is here."

"I would take much greater risks to be with you."

"Thee disregards the risk to me," said Abby firmly. "Does thee not perceive that I shall be involved in scandal if thee is seen here? And if thee is known as a Confederate soldier, shall I not be suspected of disloyalty to my country? Even now thee is compelling me to be false to my word. Thee must leave me at once."

"It is all true, and if you will forgive me I will

go away from you. But oh, my dearest Abby, may I not hear you say again that you love me? May I not kiss your hand in remembrance of the past?"

"Where is thy wife?" asked Abby, trying to appear cold.

"Dead, I do truly believe!" said Clayton.

"But thee does not know it surely?"

"No; but I will try to learn the truth."

"Thee says that thee loves me, but thee cannot even respect me if thee pursues me while thee is pledged to another. Thy wife is not dead."

Her seeming coldness angered and inflamed Clayton. He became more eager for her as she appeared to draw away from him. He had come to the school-house expecting kisses and embraces and all the fondnesses that he had known when first he told his love to the girl.

"You are very harsh with me, Abby," he said, "and you wrong me. I came to you, with my life in my hand, in an enemy's country, because I love you dearly. I will persecute you no longer, if it be persecution. Can I believe your love for me is grown cold? I believe it not! You are tied up with an accursed promise. Now, once more, before I turn away from you, probably for ever, I ask you to kiss me as in the old time, that I may still carry hope in my heart."

Abby covered her face with her hands, putting her elbows upon her desk. She made no answer.

Clayton came nearer to her. He intended to be persistent.

"You will kiss me once, Abby?"

She shook her head, her hands still on her face.

Clayton's almost irresistible impulse was to tear her hands away and to kiss her cheek, in full confidence that her wish was not indicated by her

action. This he might perhaps have done, but at that moment the door swung open and George Fotherly came into the room with Tacy Clegg.

When George saw with startled mind Clayton standing there close by Abby a great wave of rage and hatred swept in upon him. He was compelled to exercise severe self-control to restrain himself from flying at Clayton and rending him.

Abby, hearing the footsteps of the visitors, looked up and was appalled to perceive George. Quickly she covered her face again, and then, in a moment, all white and trembling, she flung out her hands appealingly to the Quaker preacher, and exclaimed:

"Oh, George! Take me away from here!"

Then, dropping her head upon the desk, into her palms, she began to weep passionately.

Disconcerted though he was, Clayton kept up a brave appearance, and turning to George and Tacy he said quietly:

"It is but just to Miss Woolford that I should say I am here without her connivance. I came upon her unexpectedly."

"I can readily believe it," responded George coming forward, and placing himself between Abby and Clayton. Tacy Clegg went over by the window at the side of the room and sat down.

Clayton bridled up at George's remark, and said:

"But my right to be here is as good as yours."

"That may bear looking into," said George. "The person upon whom thee has forced thyself does not seem to think so."

"Whether she does or not is her concern and mine, not yours."

"I make it mine!" responded George. "Thee is in the rebel army, if I am well-informed."

Clayton flinched at that.

"And if I am in the Confederate army, what then?"

"Then thee is here unlawfully. Thee is a spy. I know no man more fit for that base business!"

"You dare not talk to me in that way," said Clayton hotly, "if these women were not here."

He advanced towards George and menaced him. George did not move.

"I wish to have no war of words with thee," said the Quaker, "but I say to thee again, and I will say it to the authorities when I go from here, that thee is a rebel spy. More than this, thee is a false husband and a wicked persecutor of this fair and innocent girl. Thee is not fit to live!"

George spoke these bitter words calmly, as if there were no rage in his breast. Abby could not look at either man. Shame for herself, pity for Clayton, half admiration, half indignation for George, were in her soul when she heard the men speak.

Clayton feared when George threatened to denounce him, but he could not ignominiously retreat. He must still put on a bold front in the hope that some way might be found out of his dilemma.

He was about to speak again when George, with an imperious gesture, pointing to the door, and with his face set to hardness, said to him, in a voice deepened by intense feeling:

"Begone! I give thee one chance for thy evil life. Thee will make haste or thee will hang for it!"

It was too much for the Marylander. He was no coward. He could endure no longer the well-deserved punishment that had befallen him.

Springing at George like a tiger-cat, with a scream of rage, he tried to grasp the Quaker by the throat. George was as quick as he. With one

strong arm he fended off his assailant, and then, with his big right hand, seizing Clayton's collar, he lifted him and dragged him over the desks to the door, where he hurled the young man out, and closing the door, locked it.

Abby did not see the combat, but she knew what was happening, and she could hardly forbear to rush forward to shield Clayton from George's anger. Friend Tacy saw the whole proceeding and at first had some terror; but when the climax came and the Confederate disappeared, she smiled, and coming near to George, she said in a low voice:

"It was most unlike Friends for thee to do that, but I thank thee! I thank thee much, and I will not report thy behaviour to thy meeting."

Then she went upon the platform, and stooping over Abby tried to comfort her.

Had George been alone, Clayton surely would have returned to renew the conflict, but he was not eager to fight in the presence of the women, and, in truth, the ignominy that had befallen him was enough, without risking more. Besides, he *was* a spy, and he knew well that the military authorities would make quick work with him if George should inform them.

So he sped away swiftly, mad with hate and thwarted love, toward the crossing of the great river; and while he made haste, George turned to Abby and urged that she should go homeward with him.

Abby arose and went to the closet to find her bonnet. Friend Clegg, not fully understanding the relations between the two men and the girl, but presuming that George and Clayton were merely rivals for her affection, showed some disposition to be jocular concerning the matter, but with a stern face and a significant gesture George

warned her that the business was in truth most serious.

George shut the door of the school-house as the three persons left it, and together they moved homeward. Abby was persistent that Friend Clegg should go between her and George, and for a time they walked in silence. But Abby was deeply moved. "He knows Clayton is married," thought she, and the fact dismayed her. She was glad George had come. She was pitiful for Clayton's wound and for his humiliation. George's prowess was wonderful, but she was sorry and ashamed for Clayton. There was a strange whirl of passion, of grief and of rejoicing under that little Quaker bonnet as Abby pressed on with her companions. At last, her grief for Clayton for the moment uppermost in her mind, she said:

"Thee was harsh with him. He was very wrong; but he is one of the world's people, and thee has always been a consistent Friend."

George could not bring himself to repent what he had done. Abby's words indeed hardened his heart. "Still," he thought, "she has fondness for Clayton."

"It would be better," he said, "that we should all try to forget the matter; but thee knows, Abby, I did it for thee. It is most grave that he should seek thee in such a manner. I know thee thinks so."

"Yes!" murmured Abby.

"And thee was weeping because of it when we came in. If he would not leave thee when he ought not to stay, how should he be driven out but by force?"

"Thee was violent. Thee put shame on him."

For the first time in his life George was vexed with her.

"Shame, Abby! Who can put fresh shame

upon a man who is a traitor to both his country and his wife? He is not merely spotted with it; his very inmost soul is infamous!"

George spoke vehemently. Friend Clegg interposed and strove to turn from the subject, but Abby came between her and George, and placing her hand upon his arm, she said:

"Forgive me if I seemed to reproach thee! It is I who deserve reproach."

"No!" exclaimed George, warmly.

"But I did not summon him. I did not wish him there. I was angry when he came, and I was glad, Oh, very, very glad, to see thee. Thee has always been my friend and my helper."

"I think I would give my life for thee," said George, solemnly.

"George," she said tearfully, and clinging to his arm, "let me go home with thee, I pray thee! I am weary here. I am afraid!"

"I will take thee gladly if it be right for thee to go. But is not thy present duty here?"

"I do not know. I am too much bewildered to form any judgment!"

"Let us judge for thee, dear," said Mrs. Clegg. "Thee must stay here for awhile at any rate. It will be ruin for the school if thee should leave it. Stay for the summer at least, and Thomas and I will be with thee, even at the school-house, to see that thee is not molested."

"Thee need have no further fear of that man," said George. "He will not return. He does not covet death as a spy."

"Thee will not publicly denounce him now?" said Abby, anxiously. "Thee will give him time to escape?"

"Yes, but he must come here no more."

"I am sure he will not," said Mrs. Clegg

but Abby in her heart was by no means sure of it.

Abby went early to bed that night, and George sat late with the Cleggs speaking of her and of the need, strongly urged by the Cleggs, that she should remain for a time and continue her work in the school.

In the morning it was not difficult to persuade Abby, who had regained her composure and parted with much of her fear, that she ought not to abandon summarily the work to which she had laid her hand and in which her interest was deeply engaged. So it was agreed that she should remain until the summer was ended, if no longer, and when the Cleggs had promised that they would see to it that unwelcome visitors should not come to the school-house, George took leave of them and of Abby.

With her eyes filled with tears she bade him farewell, and holding fast his hand, while she sent messages of love to her mother, she said at the last :

"And again I think thee, dear George, for all thy love and kindness, and entreat thy forgiveness for my many misdeeds ! "

CHAPTER XIX

"WITH CONFUSED NOISE AND GARMENTS ROLLED IN BLOOD"

WHEN George was gone Abby returned to her tasks in the little school-house, endeavouring to fix all her attention upon them and to find again the quietness and peace so rudely disturbed by Clayton's appearance. The Cleggs were faithful to their promise to try to shield her from further intrusion, and not infrequently Mrs. Clegg would spend a large part of the day in or near the school-house. Each afternoon she or her husband walked out to the place to accompany Abby homeward, and both husband and wife strove eagerly to dispel the gloom that seemed at times to shroud the young girl's spirit.

The fact is, that Abby was far from contented with her cold repulsion of Clayton, and she continued to grieve that George should have heaped indignity upon him. It was not wholly unsatisfying to her that she had striven to keep her promise to her mother; but her mind persisted in looking at her conduct from Clayton's side, and then she saw with painful clearness how he might have reason to believe that the strong love she really had for him had completely vanished.

Thus when she reviewed her behaviour at the interview she inclined to reproach herself, and to believe that if Clayton should come again she would open her heart to him, no matter what the consequences might be. She had a faint hope that he would return; but he did not, and there were no tidings of him, and so the whole of the month of

August and part of September slipped away, and hope of seeing him almost died out from her mind.

But before September was old some strange and alarming rumours came to Sharpsburg from the country to the south and the west of it. There were distinct indications that the Confederate army was moving up towards Maryland, and that the Federal army marched upon parallel lines in the same direction.

These indications became more and more clear, until one day the Confederate sympathizers in the town went about with the exultant declaration that Lee's army would be in Sharpsburg on the morrow. In the morning all doubts of this movement had disappeared, and the people prepared for the coming of the invader.

Abby went as usual to the school-house, but she sent away the scholars before the morning was half done, and then she tried to decide for herself if she should go home or remain in the little building She had in her soul a hope which induced her to stay, and so she sat by the front window, looking out over the wide street, and waited for the Confederate host to appear.

The street was strangely quiet. No one was seen upon it. All the horses and wagons had vanished, and the stores were shut. Here and there a bold friend of the Southern cause fluttered the Confederate flag from a window or a doorway; but most of the people of the town showed neither love nor hatred; they remained indoors, waiting for the great army that they knew was near.

Soon horse-hoofs were heard upon the hard earth of the street, and four men in grey came riding into the village at a slow trot, with carbines cocked and held upright resting upon their thighs, with eyes glancing hither and thither in search of Federal

videttes. Then some of the house doors swung open, and women came out to wave their handkerchiefs and to hurrah for the Confederacy.

A few moments after the four horsemen had gone by, a group of a hundred more dashed into the street and followed the four. Some of these responded to the greetings of the women upon the door steps, but most of them looked grim and tired and indifferent, even to a woman's welcome.

When they had gone by there was silence for half an hour, when a great body of cavalry came through the town at a brisk trot with sabres jingling, accoutrements rattling, and the faces of the men set and hard with weariness and with consciousness of stern work to be encountered, possibly before the day was done.

The horsemen passed, and then again, as Abby watched, there was no further sight or sound of soldiery, until presently she saw a column of infantry coming up the street, so silently that she could not hear them until they came near to the school-house. The flags were flying, and the officers upon horseback wheeled and turned and ran hither and thither, but there was no music of brass or of drum. The column, loosely formed in fours and not trying to keep step, came on swiftly. The men carried their guns slanting at all angles over their shoulders, and they walked at high speed as if in a hurry to overtake the horsemen.

They were dressed in greyish brown, with hats slouched over their eyes or turned up upon their foreheads. Some were ragged, some wore clothing that had shrunken until it scantily covered the legs and the body; all were covered with grey dust and burned brown by the sun. They were lean and strong and resolute. They did not talk among themselves, they did not look with curiosity

upon the town or at the thronged windows; they were obedient to the force of a stern discipline which impelled them headlong upon the way unknown to them. They had marched far in that hot September sun, up from the South, through mountain gaps and over wide rivers and along dusty and muddy highways. They were toughened warriors with fierce strife still before them, with sudden death the sure fate of many, with hardships still to be borne, with hunger and thirst and fatigue still to be the lot of the survivors. Few of them were in the mood for laughter, few cared for the smiles of the women who loved their cause or the tears and the frowns of those who wished for victory for their enemies. To go onward: that was what they had to do; and they did it, not with sullenness, not with regret that they had become soldiers, not with pangs caused by memories of home, but with intense, unremitting, persistent earnestness, as men who had learned to suffer and to be patient in the performance of their task.

Abby watched them with eager curiosity as they hurried by, rank after rank, regiment after regiment, division after division. These were the men whose valorous deeds had made the whole world ring with applause. These were the men who had won victory in those mighty battles in the South, of which she had heard so much. It was these men and such as these that had stood steadfast in the blazing fury of the firing line, who had stormed and carried entrenchments, who had thrust back the brave enemy that charged upon them. She looked at them and wondered. It was terrible to her that men should be so eager to kill, so ready to be killed; but she could not help feeling a glow of admiration that they should be so brave; and then to her peaceful little soul, so timid and so bred to

quietness, there came for the first time some comprehension of what men mean when they talk of the glory of war. Horrible the strife is, but was there not indeed something to stir the blood and kindle the imagination in the sight of such an instrument of war—a human instrument—having a single purpose and wielded by a single man for the achievement of that purpose?

Abby tried to look at the face of each man that passed her, but she found she could not do that, the troops went by so rapidly. Then she remembered that Clayton was an officer, and she began to watch for the men who wore the tokens of rank. Hour after hour she sat there, and hour after hour the troops rushed by, a multitude of almost inconceivable greatness; and still she could not see the man for whom she looked. She was growing weary of watching. Perhaps he did not belong to this part of the army. Perhaps he had fallen sick and had been left behind. Possibly the soldiers with whom he was had gone past the town by another road. She could not have missed him, she thought, for he knew where she would be, at the school-house, and she was sure that if he should go by there would be some greeting for her. She had almost resolved to shut the school-house door and to go home when the great guns began to roll past, each with its train of horses, each followed by the caisson, with the soldiers sitting upon the boxes, with the mounted drivers cracking their whips and the officers riding hard by. She could not resist looking at the cannon. They seemed terrible. How could men stand up before them when the flames poured from the iron mouths? Perhaps she should hear them roar if it were true that the Federal army lay just beyond the town waiting for its enemy.

Then, when the guns were gone, the foot-soldiers

came again; and while she looked at them a man darted from the ranks, dashed into the door of the school-house, and before she could see his face, his arms were about her.

"My darling," he said, "my dearest love, my Abby! You will give me one kiss, my Abby, just one," and he held her close and kissed her, and then, though she had not had time or breath to say one word to him, he leaped from the doorway and was gone. She went to the window to catch a glimpse of him. She saw him run to his place in the moving column, and he turned and waved his sword at her. Then he vanished.

She closed the door and sat down upon a chair. She cared no more for the soldiers who still swept past. She felt the hot kisses upon her cheek and her lips; upon her sleeve she saw some of the dust that had been upon the arm of his blouse. She would let it stay there. She wanted to think of him and his caress before her heart stopped beating so fast and the flush upon her face became cool again.

Until the noon hour came Abby sat alone in the schoolroom, with the door locked, thinking of Clayton, of the peril in which he would be in the great battle she feared was impending, and of her hope for him that mingled so strongly with her hope for the success of his opponents. She dreamed of the happiness that would come to her if the Confederate army should be driven back after Clayton had been made a prisoner, for then he would be in safety, perhaps safe until the war was ended, and perchance she might visit him in his captivity and in some fashion minister to him. Another dream she had; she shuddered at it, but there was a gleam of joy in it: if Clayton should be slightly wounded and they should bear him to the village, then she might wait on him and nurse him,

and day by day, as he should grow stronger with tender care, he would love her more and more dearly. She had read of such things in books and newspapers, and the experience might be hers; but she could hardly bear to think of his being hurt.

At last she rose up and left the school, to thread her way home among the Confederate stragglers that thronged the street. She could not taste her dinner. She could not listen to the talk she was sure to hear against the invaders. She went to her room, and after awhile Mrs. Clegg came knocking at her door, and together they climbed the narrow ladder to the platform on the roof of the house. There they looked out to the north and east. Near to them, on the rising ground to the westward of Antietam Creek, they could easily see the thin grey line of the Confederates stretching itself in front of the town. Men moved hither and thither, and horses galloped to put the guns in position. With the glass they could perceive, beyond the ravine in which ran the stream, long lines of men in blue, a mighty host, and here too there was the movement of preparation.

"There will be an awful battle, Abby dear," said Mrs. Clegg. "That is McClellan's army, and here is Lee's. We shall be in the very thick of it."

And Abby, silent, looked and looked, not long at the lines of blue, but at the grey line, and she wondered where in all that swarm of men was the man who kissed her cheek in the morning.

Her companion went down into the house, but she remained almost until dusk looking and hoping and ofttimes praying for the one being in the host whose life was to her supremely precious.

It was a restless perturbed night for all the people of the village, and when the morning broke the streets were thronged with Confederate soldiers

and with all the back-lash of the army. Bodies of troops marched through, orderlies galloped furiously from point to point. Ammunition wagons, baggage wagons, ambulances and all the necessary paraphernalia for the sustenance and safety of an army thronged the streets, and mingling with the visitors were citizens of the town and farmers who had flocked into the town, some impelled by curiosity, some seeking for safety, and some full of joy that the champions of the Southern cause had come into Maryland. It would have been impossible to have school, and Abby spent the day trying to read, trying to sleep, but always with her mind upon her soldier, who stood just out of her reach upon the verge of the stream that ran close by the town.

At supper time the news came that the great Confederate leader was at hand, and had made his headquarters at the edge of the village. They knew then that the battle would not be long delayed.

There was little rest on that night also, for the street was full of movement and the air of cries; and for each citizen there was the strain of waiting—of waiting for a great catastrophe which would surely swallow up the lives of thousands of men and which might play havoc with the homes of peaceful people.

Abby, sleeping for a little while, lay wide awake in her room after midnight, and the hours passed slowly until three o'clock came. Then, with terror in her soul, she heard the roar of cannon, soon followed by the rattle and crash of musketry, and she knew that the struggle had begun.

She arose, and without lighting her lamp, dressed herself, while the boom of the cannon became more vehement. It was the most frightful sound she had ever heard, and it constantly gained in fury. As she listened, trembling, her mind involuntarily wandered off to the old meeting-house in the shadow

of the trees at Plymouth and to the sweet peace of the gatherings there for worship. She thought of George and of her mother, and of the hours of silent prayer. She thought of that quiet meeting for worship long ago with George in her garden in the calm June morning amid the smell of the roses, and she wished she were there now, at home, with Friends and at peace.

The tears came upon her cheeks. She looked from the window upon the black night, and there, out by the creek, the landscape was lighted by the flashes from the roaring cannon, and she even heard the yells of the infuriated combatants as they met their enemies. The sight was too terrible. It was a glimpse of hell, and so she turned, and falling into a chair she placed her hands over her eyes and sought God in prayer.

She could not at such a time have that tranquillity of spirit with which Friends were used to enter consciously the Divine presence. Her heart was filled with terror and with dread foreboding for the man she loved; and indeed who could have maintained spiritual calm while that wild tempest of war raged within the hearing? Half hysterically, in ejaculatory phrases, she prayed for Clayton; she prayed that the battle-storm might quickly cease; that God might bring solace to the hearts that would be wrung with anguish because of the slaughter upon that field of war; that He would save her country and bring to it Peace again. And then for herself she besought forgiveness. She prayed that those whom she loved might forgive her as God would forgive her; and then she wept again; and still the thunder of the guns grew louder and the rattle of the volleying muskets mingled with the cries of the furious soldiery.

When she dropped her hands, exhausted of her

capacity for prayer, the dawn had come, and she went to the window. New bodies of soldiers poured along the street that they might plunge into the combat that lay beyond; but there was a contrary current, for now men thronged in from the battle-field carrying wounded soldiers upon stretchers and in ambulances, and other combatants, sorely hurt but not yet helpless, marched beside them covered with blood and staggering onward, sometimes to tumble upon the pavements, sometimes to seek shelter where they might dress their hurts.

And so the day began. So its long hours continued. She went out sometimes to help where a woman could give help and blessing, and into the faces of wounded men she looked all through the day fearing that she might see the face of one she knew; but often the scene became too terrible to be borne, and then she would fly for refuge and respite to her room and to prayer.

Midday came and passed, the long afternoon lapsed into evening and the shadows began to fall, but still, almost without intermission, the thunder of the artillery rolled back into the town and the sounds of the conflict told of insatiable fury. Abby went early to her chamber and remained there, the window open and the horror of the maimed and the dying still in the street below her. Before long, weary of the excitement and the misery, she fell asleep in her chair. She awakened suddenly in the darkness, and found that silence had come. A single shot was heard now and then, far away, but all the mighty tumult of the battle at last was stilled.

Making a light, she found that half-past nine was the hour. After eighteen hours the conflict was ended—the most sanguinary day of all the dreadful days of the Civil War. She did not know who had the victory. She was so weary in soul and body that

she could hardly rouse herself to care or to inquire; and so she went to bed and once more to sleep.

When the morning came she learned that the two armies still lay along their lines outside the town, and that at any moment the strife might be renewed. But it was not. There was something like satiety upon both sides, and exhaustion. Thus during the whole day a kind of truce prevailed, while living soldiers sought out and buried the dead ones or carried the wounded away to places of safety. So night returned once more, and when Abby had fallen asleep she was aroused by a great movement in the street. She arose and went to the window, and there in the darkness she could perceive a mighty shadowy host, men on foot, men on horses, horses dragging cannon and wagons following, rushing swiftly away from the battlefield and towards the Potomac river.

She knew at once what it meant; the Confederate army was retreating; the battle was ended completely; there was some sort of victory for the cause that had her devotion. She was glad for that, but she wondered where Clayton was. He might pass her window while she looked down upon the moving throng and she would not know it; he might be wounded and helpless on that awful field of strife, or he might be dead.

She looked and looked in vain upon his comrades, for there could be no sight of him in the gloom, and then, long ere the soldiers had ceased to go by, she went back to rest determined that she would try upon the morrow to know his fate.

In the morning Abby put on her straight little grey bonnet, and folded her grey silk handkerchief upon her breast. Then summoning Mrs. Clegg's negro servant Joseph to accompany her, for she had dread to go alone upon this errand, she went down

the street towards the battlefield. Wounded men were still being carried into the town, and the Federal cavalry were moving forward in small bodies to discover the track of the retreating army.

Abby and her companion had not gone far along the road before they came upon evidences of the battle. Twenty thousand men had been killed and wounded in the contest, and the burial parties at work in every part of the field had not had time enough half to complete their task. The wounded were lying here and there often in groups, and men were busy among them, caring for them and preparing for their removal; but the number was so great that some must wait and suffer and die before their turn should come.

The fences were down, the cornfields were trampled into black mud, the trees were torn and dismembered by the artillery firing, and everywhere to right and to left the slain and the hurt, in blue and in grey, were seen upon the ground.

The horror of it all came home to Abby's mind with new force as she witnessed this misery and destruction, and she felt strong thankfulness that she belonged to a body of Christ's people who, through all the wild strife of the centuries, had never faltered in bearing their testimony against this wickedness. She had to shut her heart against sympathy for individuals as she passed them by, for what could she do to help them? and she felt that if for a moment she should permit her feelings to get control of her she should be unable to stand.

She and the negro looked sharply for the fallen officers who should be dressed in Confederate uniforms. Some they saw, and glancing at their faces passed them by. Over the fields they went, until they came to a wood bordering the creek. Here there had been fierce fighting; here the trees

were scarred and torn, and here the blue and the grey lay in heaps together. But the girl saw no face that she knew. Turning to the right, she and her companion clambered over a low wall into the road, and then making their way up a bank upon the other side of the highway they surmounted another wall, coming upon a trampled wheatfield where also there had been frightful combat. Thence among the dying and the dead they went on into another field close by a little wood, and here, under the shade of the trees, Abby stopped and rested upon a great stone. The sun was hot, and she was tired of body and sick of soul; and she was discouraged. She could not hope to look at all that great host of the victims of the fray, and if she should do so, he might have been carried away or he might be marching unhurt to the Southward. She was almost inclined to go back and to give up the search; but while she sat, Joseph went beyond and looked in the wood and in the adjoining field.

Presently he stopped and summoned her. Her heart almost ceased beating; but quickly she remembered that the man had not known Clayton. He had found another Confederate officer, that was all. She arose and went to him. He stood beyond a stone wall over which she climbed, and there, in a corner, was a Confederate soldier dead.

It was Clayton. He lay supine, with his left arm above his head, his sword in his other hand, his face of the colour of ashes, and a great wound over his heart. She knew him instantly. She did not cry. She knelt quickly beside him saying:

"It is he, Joseph. It is Mr. Harley. Go and get some water from the creek, Joseph."

The negro left her. She put her hand upon the white cheek; it was cold. She took his hand in hers; it felt like marble. She knelt beside him upon the

ground and brushed the dark hair tenderly away from his forehead. Then she looked around, and seeing no one near, she kissed him again and again, speaking passionate words under her breath to him as if she could not trust herself to open utterance. She was holding his hand when Joseph returned with water in the crown of his felt hat.

"It is too late Joseph," she said gently, but she dipped her handkerchief in the water and wiped away the grime and the blood upon his face, and tried to take it from the breast of his blouse where the shell had struck him.

"Do not cry, Joseph," she said. "Go back to town and find some one to help him home. We must bring him home again, Joseph. We must not let the soldiers bury him here. His mother will want to see him. Go now, and I will wait here for you."

The negro left her and went swiftly toward the village. She sat close beside the dead man, and lifted his head upon her lap. They were beyond the reach or knowledge of the soldiers that were searching the field. They were under the screen of the wall close to the great trees that rustled in the autumn breeze. Alone with him, she looked at the face of her lover. There were no tears. She wondered that she did not weep. Her mind ran back over the years, and while she thought and thought minutely of each of the times when she had been with him, of his words of tenderness, of his kisses, of the clasping of his arms, and of all his gaiety and loveliness, she talked to him in half articulate cooings as a mother to a sleeping babe, and kissed his hand and his face. And then, suddenly, she thought of the night when, upon the porch of the parsonage in Connock, she first heard him sing, and the tones of his voice became audible to her memory. She leaned far over him, taking both his hands in hers, and, almost

touching his face, she began to sing, and she sang bravely to the end the old song :

> Oh, my lost love, and my own, own love,
> And my love that loved me so!
> Is there never a chink in the world above
> Where they listen for words below?
> Nay, I spoke once and I grieved thee sore,
> I remember all that I said;
> And now thou wilt hear me no more, no more,
> Till the sea gives up her dead.

Her voice quavered upon the last line, and as she ended it the tension that held her relaxed, and she fell into a passion of weeping, kissing him and murmuring to him amid her sobs; and so she sat until she heard the step of Joseph, who had come back again.

The man had a companion, and both looked at her with pity in their faces as she lifted herself from the earth. Joseph, at her command, searched the dead man's clothing, that she might retain for his mother anything that would be worth retaining, and among the articles the negro handed to her were two letters and a locket.

"It might be mine," she said, as she put it with the letters into her pocket, with a button loosed from the blouse that he wore.

Then the two men bore the body away across the field to the road, where there was a wagon, and in the wagon Abby and her lover and Joseph and his companion went back slowly toward Sharpsburg As they climbed the little hill that ran upward from the border of the creek, a train of forlorn gipsy wagons came downward to pass them, and on the front seat of the first wagon Abby saw, and knew at once, the woman who had read her palm and pretended to tell her fortune by the great fountain at Spring Mill long ago. Abby looked at her with amazement and sad foreboding, but the woman saw her not, or would not seem to see her. The eyes of the gipsy

turned neither to the right nor to the left as her vehicle went by toward the Federal lines.

"She said," murmured Abby to herself, "that I should die of a broken heart. I wonder what she said to Clayton?"

Friend Thomas Clegg sent to Mrs. Harley a telegram telling her of Clayton's death, and then he sent the body home to her.

When Abby came to the house, she went into her chamber and locked the door.

She bethought her of the locket and the letters and the button. She took them out and pressed her lips upon them. The button should be hers, always. The locket she did not know. She opened it and went with it close to the window. There was the face of a woman within it, and the face smiled upon Abby. She turned to the letters. She would not open them. There was chill in her heart, and she reeled across the room to fall upon the bed. "Was ever sorrow like my sorrow?" she said, as she lay there and thought of the dead man and her love for him. That love was mighty enough, she found, to overbear all other feeling even now. She had never hated anybody—she knew not how; and no matter what Clayton had concealed from her, she did believe he truly loved her as she would always truly love him; for how could she help it? Long ago all power over her soul in that respect had vanished. Her passion mastered her.

When evening came she wrapped the letters and the locket together, and Mrs. Clegg should address them to his mother.

She felt so weary next day that she could not move to gather her scholars, and indeed the fever of the battle was still so strong upon the village that it would have been hard to do so. As she thought of it, the longing for home came upon her, and she

considered if she should not give up the school to another person and go back to her mother and that dear grey house upon the hill. She spoke of it at supper, and just as the meal was ended George Fotherly came to the door and asked to see her.

"I came as soon as I could, Abby, after we heard that the battle was ended. I was dread for thee when I knew it was so near to thee."

"It was most kind of thee, George," she said. And then he talked to her of Connock and of her dear ones there. "Thee is sad, Abby," he said, looking nearly at her. "The strain has been too great for thee, my girl."

"I hear the roaring of the cannon always, George. Take me home, take me home! I cannot bear to stay here any longer. Will they think I have left my duty if I go?"

"No," said George, "thee must come with me. We will go in the morning. Thy mother is hungry for thee, and I long for thee too, Abby. Some one will take thy place at the school."

That night Abby made ready for the journey, and the next day in the early morning she left the house and walked alone swiftly out to the place where the corner of the stone wall lay in the shadow of the wood, and there, stooping, she kissed the ground that bore still the impress of the slain soldier's form. Hurrying back to the town, she found George waiting for her; and with him she went upon the train to the northward, up among the hills, and while the night was early her mother's arms were about her.

"I cannot bear to see thee weeping," said George to her as he bade farewell. "Thee is overwrought and weary. I will come to-morrow and see thee, and I am sure thee will have a smile for me, my dear."

But Abby felt that for her the joy of life was gone forever.

CHAPTER XX

A NEW MASTER FOR THE GREY HOUSE

THE first impression Abby had when she came home was of her mother's declining health and strength. The work of the summer, involving housekeeping for several exacting boarders, had borne heavily upon her, and as Abby clasped her thin hand and looked into her pallid face the girl was full of regret that she had gone away instead of remaining to share the burden with Rachel. The sum total of the achievement of both women was the accumulation of money enough to continue for a few months the maintenance of the home to which they were fondly attached. It was, however, clear to Abby that she must hereafter stay with her mother, and that upon the younger woman would devolve the task of earning a livelihood for the two. But, indeed, Abby could not conceal from herself the promise that unless a great change for the better should speedily be made in her mother's health, the time was not far distant when the daughter would find herself alone in the grey house and in the world, with no one to care for but herself.

Abby had not been in Connock many hours when she found herself impelled to visit Mrs. Ponder; and so, before that good woman had time to come to her, Abby slipped over to the parsonage and had from the minister's wife greeting hardly less fervent than that given her by Rachel Woolford.

"It is so delightful, my dear, to have you at home again," said Mrs. Ponder, when she had kissed and hugged Abby, and when both of them were seated in the living room. "Your mother

needs your help and your affection a good deal more, in my opinion, than the little darkies need your instruction. She is not really strong and well since father died. You have noticed that, Abby?"

"Yes."

"And while I make a point of never meddling with other people's business, it is perfectly clear to me, if you will let me say so because I love you both, that your place is by her side, even if the frowsy and frumpled and forlorn children of Ethiopia never learn a letter of the alphabet or find out that two and two make four.

"So I am right glad you will be here, where you can comfort that lonely mother and where I can see you sometimes and you can be out of danger. It must have been perfectly awful, my dear, wasn't it, to find yourself in the very swirl of that frightful battle? Weren't you scared very nearly to death? I am absolutely certain that I should be completely unnerved by the sound of one cannon, because I could never stand even the explosion of a fire-cracker; and what you endured with all that deafening crash of cannons and muskets almost in your very ears, can hardly be conceived by me. I never expected to see you alive and with us again.

"And how very, very strange it was, Abby dear," continued Mrs. Ponder, becoming suddenly grave and tearful, "that that poor dear boy of ours should have been in the very midst of that terrible conflict, near to you, almost within the sound of your voice, and you did not know it! Suppose he had suspected you were in the town, do you think he would have sought you out before the battle began? I am sure of it. He always seemed to like you very, very much when he was here, and at one time, indeed, Abby, I had some hopes that——"

Abby was weeping, and Mrs. Ponder restrained her tongue before the sentence was finished.

"I know, she continued, "that his mother's heart is broken, bereft as she is of her children."

Then Mrs. Ponder joined her tears with Abby's

"But I will say it of Clayton, even if he was fighting on the wrong side, that he was conscientious about it. He followed his deep convictions, and I have no doubt at all that, if the whole truth were known, it would be found that he died the death of a hero, facing the foe with undaunted courage, and perhaps compelling many a one upon the other side to bite the dust.

"That is some consolation, of course, to his mother, but not much, for to lose him is a frightful affliction. Sometimes, when I have been inclined to regret that Dr. Ponder and I have no children, I have tried to find comfort in the reflection that maybe if children had come to us, they might have turned out badly or gone off from the Church and joined some of the denominations that are around us, or at any rate, have died and filled us with lamentation; and so I have persuaded myself that perhaps all is for the best; excepting, Oh, my darling Abby! every now and then I dream that I have a lovely little child of my own cuddling in my lap and looking into my face and laughing with me, and he always has curly golden hair and the sweetest blue eyes, and when I see him and hug him and find his fat little hand patting my cheek, I am so happy that to wake up is to be miserable. Do you suppose I shall ever see such a child in Heaven?"

Mrs. Ponder stopped for a good hard cry. Then, regaining her composure and wiping her eyes, she went on:

"For my part, dear Abby, I am tired of this horrid war, which is destroying our bravest and

best and really getting more and more hopeless. Did you ever hear of such amazing imbecility upon the part of men who pretend to be generals? Most of them are not fit to command a squad of the Connock Home Guards, and goodness knows that does not call for very eminent military gifts.

"I am firmly convinced that some kind of a new experiment must be tried unless the Union is to be permitted to go to pieces and all shall be lost and our country reduced to a mere wreck of a once mighty republic. Over and over again I have urged Dr. Ponder to go to Washington to see the President, or to write in firm language to him, to insist that the direction of the whole campaign against the Southerners shall be placed finally in the control of the clergy. You know what I mean: the clergy of the Church—the Apostolic clergy. These men are divinely inspired; they are clothed with more than human authority, and they are to a man ready to consecrate themselves to such a service as this.

"If I had my way, I would proclaim an armistice, or something of that kind—I think that is the right name; anyhow, a truce, you might call it, so that there should be no more firing guns and killing one another for a specified time. Then I would send Dr. Ponder down to Virginia and have him expostulate with Jefferson Davis and General Lee, and explain fully to them, so that they could no longer plead inability to see the truth clearly, just in what particulars their conduct is scandalous and indefensible, and using his authority as a member of the Apostolic ministry, have him command them to stop and to lay down their arms and to let things alone.

"But Dr. Ponder is afraid the government at Washington will not listen to him if he should offer

to perform this patriotic service, and so he contents himself by acting as chaplain to this ridiculous Connock Home Guard, which will never even snap a cap at the enemy; though why the government at Washington should dare to refuse to heed the warnings and remonstrances of a man who speaks with Apostolical power is completely beyond my comprehension.

"And now, Abby dear, somehow or other you have let me do all the talking, while in fact the one thing I wanted to see you for was to hear about your experiences as a school teacher, and about the battle that raged all around you on that dreadful day. So George Fotherly brought you home, did he? He is a fine man, and I know he thinks much of you. Oh, if only he would come under Dr. Ponder's influence, and would——But I must not trouble you with that. Please tell me about your life in Sharpsburg"

It was too long a story to be told in full upon this visit, and so, when Abby had spoken briefly, she bade Mrs. Ponder farewell, promising to come again and to talk with both Mrs. Ponder and the doctor about her Maryland experiences.

With Abby at home to direct the affairs of the household, Rachel relaxed the strain that had been upon her, and at once the swift decline of her strength showed that the demand upon her powers made by the duties of the summer had been too severe for her. Rachel's sister remained in the house, and to her Abby turned over the management of affairs, while the girl addressed herself almost wholly to the task, daily growing more arduous, of ministering to her mother.

Sometimes the thought came to Abby that Rachel might not live, and it came like a blow. That catastrophe seemed to Abby so desperate

and so bewildering that she could not bear to contemplate it, but her clear good sense permitted her to make some fair estimate of the probabilities, and she could not long delude herself with any strong measure of hopefulness. What would happen to her *then*—what the world would be like to her with both father and mother gone, she could not bring herself to consider. She could behold in that event simply thick darkness and the final exclusion of hope and joy from her soul.

Rachel had no illusions about her own condition. She believed, from the first hour of helplessness, that she should die before the winter came, and it grieved her to think of the fate of the girl, left to fight all by herself the dreadful battle of life. Down deep in her heart Rachel tried to put her trust in the Divine Helper who cannot forget the widow or the orphan, and her longing desire and expectation were that Omnipotence in this case would employ as his instrument George Fotherly, making him the husband and the protector of the motherless girl. But she had misgivings, for clearly enough George's suit with Abby had not prospered as she hoped it would.

Before October was past Rachel said plainly to Abby that her end was near, and she talked with her about her future.

"I feel, dear child, as if I were unkind to thee to go away from thee when father has gone. It seems sometimes that I deserve reproach for deserting thee, as if thee were a helpless little girl and I a cruel mother. But I know, dear, that it is the common way. We marry and have children; they grow to be men and women, and then father and mother, no longer needed, are called, I hope to higher things."

"It is the usual way, dear mother," answered

Abby, weeping, "but it is not less hard for the one left behind than if it were the first time in human experience."

"I would stay with thee if I could," said Rachel, "but there is a Divine Hand that leads us, and it is guided by better wisdom than ours. I am sore to leave thee, but I am willing to go if that be God's way; and then I will not hide from thee that my soul is filled with longing to be with father once again. I believe he waits for me and wants me."

"And I will come some day to be with both of you," said Abby. "Life will have nothing for me when thee is gone."

"I wish, dear child, it might have a loving husband for thee. Then thee would be neither lonely nor helpless, and if I knew thee would soon marry such an one, I should have more peace while I wait for the call."

"It seems to me, mother, I shall never marry," answered Abby with downcast eyes. Rachel had heard from Mrs. Ponder of Clayton's death. She would not allude to it in speaking with Abby, but now she said:

"Thee must have no constraint put upon thee in such a solemn business, but if George shall seek thy hand, I beg of thee to search thy heart deeply that thee may find if thee cannot love him. No woman could have a better husband than he would be to thee."

"I will try to do right, mother," responded the girl, but she found in her soul no true response to the appeal thus made to her.

When a few weeks had passed the life of the sick woman became more and more feeble, until one night in late November the last tiny spark lost its glow and went out, without suffering for the sick woman or warning to the watcher in the room.

Two days afterwards the house was thronged again by friends and neighbours who came to make the last farewells, and then Rachel was laid beneath the sycamore trees by Isaac's side in the burial-ground at Plymouth.

All through the time of illness and of mourning George Fotherly ministered to the Woolford household as he had opportunity, and not many days after Rachel's death he went to the county town and took from the record the mortgage upon the grey house. Abby had never known of it and she should not know. He came often to see Abby and the aunt who remained with her, and to him they looked for counsel respecting the movements that should be made respecting Abby's future.

Mrs. Ponder was a frequent visitor, and her ardent desire was to be a comforter.

"And now, my dear," she said one day, "you must consider very thoughtfully what you had better do with yourself. I am sure you will carry the weight of your sorrow better if you can contrive to be busy."

"I must earn my living," replied Abby, "and I am willing to try very hard to do so, but I am not sure just what I ought to undertake."

"Your friends must try to discover some kind of a career for you my child," said Mrs. Ponder, "and then open it up for you. You have proved in your experiment with the little African estrays in Sharpsburg that you have gifts as a teacher, and teaching is almost as honourable a profession as the sacred ministry. A thought occurs to me: Why not let some of our rich Episcopalians rent your house for a handsome sum and try to build up a Church school for girls? Dr. Ponder could be the nominal head of the institution, to give it dignity and the advantage of Apostolical authority, and you

could take a place in it as teacher of one of the preparatory departments. If you are willing, I will talk over the plan with Dr. Ponder and have him see the bishop and some of our wealthy people in the city; and by this means not only will you have a comfortable income, but you will be brought directly under Church influences, and no doubt will be able before long to see clearly the difference between the Apostolic Church and the loose miscellaneous denominations that are around us, not one of which has any right to call itself a church, or anything else than a 'persuasion,' although goodness knows how any well-balanced person can be persuaded to regard them as an approved means of getting to heaven completely passes my power of comprehension."

George had strong convictions of his own with respect to Abby's destiny, but he shrank from expressing them to her in the time of her greatest distress lest he should seem to be taking an ungenerous advantage of her. But one day, a few weeks after the funeral, Abby wrote to him asking him to come to see her, and George slipped the note in his pocket with his mind made up to speak his thought to Abby upon his next visit if he could find opportunity.

Abby gave him a warm welcome when he came, and she led him into the library, where she put him in her father's chair before the grate-fire, while she sat near to him and facing him.

"George," she said, when they had spoken for a little while of other things, "I wanted to see thee that I might take counsel of thee about my future. Thee is always so wise and kind that I know thee will not think I trouble thee too much."

"No," he answered. "Thee can never trouble me by asking me to help thee."

"Thee has told me, in effect, that poor father's estate was all swallowed up by his creditors?"

"Yes, but this house was thy mother's, and by her death it falls to thee."

"Is there no encumbrance on it?"

"No," answered George, "not that I know of." And that was just the truth.

"Then," continued Abby, "I have shelter secured, but I must try to earn something. I cannot bear to take boarders."

"I should advise thee not to."

"Mrs. Ponder," said Abby, smiling, "wants me to rent the dwelling to the Episcopalians for a Church School for girls, and she thinks I might become a teacher in such a school and gradually be brought over to her views."

George laughed and said:

"Some of Friend Ponder's views are a little queer; but she is a good woman and she loves thee."

"I had already thought I might rent the house to somebody, and then, with the rental to help me, begin teaching. I think I could take a place in the primary department of the Friends' School in Philadelphia and board in the city. Or had I better go back to Sharpsburg and begin the work there again?"

"Thee does not feel drawn to that?"

"No, for it will always be associated in my mind with that dreadful battle. Does thee think I could get a position in the Friends' School?"

"I am not sure; but we might try to learn about it."

"I could sew, but it is dreary work, and ill-paid; and then, George, I fear I am hardly strong enough to sit and bend over such a task all day long."

"Thee must not do it."

"I will be greatly obliged to thee, then, if thee

will take the trouble to see some of the Friends who direct the School in the city and ask them if they can find a place for another teacher. I fear I am not very skilful, but I did seem to succeed fairly well with the little black folk at Sharpsburg, and I will try very hard to do well if the Friends will open a way for me."

George remained silent for awhile, and Abby, with her mind wholly upon her plan of going into the Friends' School, looked into the fire and said no more.

"I wish," said George, abruptly, "that thee would let me plan for thee instead of planning for thyself. I do not much like any of thy projects."

"If thee would plan for me, I should be very grateful to thee. I am so little wise about such matters, and things that women can do are so few in number. Thee ha some idea in thy mind?"

"Yes, but I am not sure how it will be regarded by thee."

"What is it?"

"I do not find it easy," said George, with the colour coming into his face, "to explain the matter to thee; and then I fear thee may think me unkind and selfish in speaking of it in the time of thy great sorrow; but I hope thee will not misjudge me. I am so anxious to serve thee that indeed I would rather sacrifice myself completely than to seek to please myself."

Abby's cheeks were hot, too. She folded her hands and looked downward. Could George believe that she sent for him that she might artfully lead him on to the confession she now knew was coming? Her conscience was clear; she had never had a thought of such a thing.

"Thee has not forgotten," George continued, "that I told thee once I loved thee dearly? and if

I had not told thee, still thee would know it. Thee knows without any further words of mine that I love thee now far more than I ever did. Is it displeasing to thee that I should say so?"

"No!"

"Thee said, out there in the garden, thee would never marry any one but me. Oh, if thee could bring thyself now to go one step further and to say thee will take me for thy husband! Not that thee may have a protector and not because sorrow has made thee desolate, but because thee loves me and thee knows that I love thee and will give my whole life to bringing happiness to thee."

"Alas!" said Abby, looking at him with a wan smile, "I fear there can be no more happiness for me. But I do thank thee most heartily for all thy kindness and thy affection."

"And thee will consent? I came here to-day resolved to ask thee that."

Abby withheld her speech for a moment. Then she said:

"But if I shall consent, will it not seem that my motive was not right? I fear that even thee might suspect me, but I speak truly, dear George, that I did not think of this action of thine when I asked thee to come to see me."

"I should have greater joy if thee had thought of it and desired it. But I suspect thee of nothing. I am sure thee has always cared for me, and had we been left to ourselves I believe thee would have taken me for thy husband. If thee will take me now, thee may take me absolutely, with all the love and trust and honour and unquestioning faithfulness that are in my soul. If thee inclines at all to it, Oh, my dearest Abby, do not be turned away by any fear of thyself or me, or of what others may think. I could give thee up to make thee happy,

but not to have thee lonely and miserable and defenceless."

"George," she said, turning her face to him. "I am but a poor broken creature to whom life has become all sorrowful. But since mother died I do care more for thee than for any living creature. I owe thee much indeed for all thy sweet, gentle kindness to me, and I have brought woe enough to thee. If thee will take me with all my griefs and faults and frailties and let me try to love thee dearly, I will give myself to thee and pray always that I may be worthy of thee."

She put out her hand to him. He grasped it, and lifting her to her feet he put his arms about her tenderly and kissed her.

"How much I thank thee, my dearest!" he said with rapture upon his face.

He kept his arm about her and she put her head upon his breast.

"The gain is all for me, dear George," she said. "I am forlorn and weak and sinful, and not deserving to be a wife to such a man as thee. Thee will weary of me, dear, and of my sorrowfulness."

He laughed joyously and embraced and kissed her again.

"I have loved thee since I was a child, and loved thee more and more as the years rolled by. I shall love thee always, here and in eternity. This is the crown of my life-long hopes and prayers, that thee should be my wife and I should give up everything to thee!"

It was with much satisfaction that all the members of the meeting learned that these two choice Friends were to be made man and wife; and when next First-day George and Abby drove to Plymouth in the pleasant old fashion, everybody had congratulations to offer. The drive was not discomforting

to Abby, for it recalled all the delights that had come to her from George's society before trouble enveloped her. Sometimes she could not help thinking of the day when she walked along this road with Clayton and sat not far from him in the house of worship; but she strove to put these memories away from her, and to be faithful in the inmost recesses of her soul to the man to whom she had at the last given herself. After all the anguish she had endured it was restful just to lean on him, to look up to him and trust him, and to try to transform into true affection the strong feeling of regard she entertained for him. She had found the way of unfaithfulness so hard that she resolved with all her power to give to this brave and generous man who loved her the best she could command for him.

And George never for a moment seemed to doubt her loyalty. He was openly exultant that she had given herself to him, and he lavished upon her kindness and caress. In his preaching now on First-days there was a note of triumph and exaltation that was new to his hearers. Earthly life had become more joyful for him, and at the same time his vision of the heavenly things, of the holiness of the love which is, as he believed, a part of the eternities, was made clearer and more glorious.

The marriage had been arranged for the early springtime, and Abby would have it in the grey house, as if in the presence of her father and mother, and she would ask that only a few of their nearest relatives and a dozen or more representatives of the meeting should be present.

The brief and beautiful ceremony was performed in the long north parlour, where the bridegroom and the bride, standing together by the front windows and facing the group of guests, repeated the words with which the members of the Society join themselves in the holy estate of matrimony.

George, taking Abby by the hand, declared:

"In the presence of the Lord and before this assembly I take thee, Abigail Woolford, to be my wife, promising with Divine assistance to be unto thee a loving and faithful husband until death shall separate us."

Then Abby repeated the words for the woman's part, and the knot was tied by the laws of God and of man.

But Dr. Ponder, standing far back in the room, grieved much that these two young people, blinded by education and prejudice against the truth, should not have sought, and thus might miss, the benediction of the Church; and so, silently, without articulation, but with a purpose that there should be genuine consecration, he repeated the whole of the marriage-service in the prayer-book, and then shutting his eyes, he solemnly bestowed the Apostolic blessing upon the pair, and breathed freely to think that all was now well.

On his way home Mrs. Ponder said to him:

"Really, birdie, if I were married in that rude, unchurchly way, I could not convince myself that I was not still single."

Then Dr. Ponder told her how he had conveyed the sanction of the Church to the union of George with Abby, and Mrs. Ponder was grateful for his thoughtfulness.

"At the same time, birdie, while I think the Church is practically always right, and her services too sacred to be tampered with, I really do wish sometimes that the marriage service might have omitted from it that unfortunate reference to Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac was weak and foolish enough, dear knows, but if I were a man, that artful old humbug of a Rebekah would be the last kind of a woman I should choose for a wife."

The honeymoon was spent in Boston and New York, cities Abby had never seen before, and which she looked on now with keen interest. In New York one sunny afternoon, on their way homeward, they sauntered into Central Park. They tried to hurry across one of the wide drive-ways among the horses and the vehicles that thronged it. The crowd was so great that they were confused, and they narrowly escaped being run down by a richly-caparisoned team that dashed up to them. George seized Abby and thrust her aside, while he was pushed against the door of the low open carriage to which the horses were attached. The horses were sharply halted by the driver, and looking up, George and Abby saw, sitting in the vehicle within arm's reach of them, a woman covered with jewels, brilliantly dressed, and with her face painted. A vulgar looking man sat by her side.

It was Dolly Harley, and when she recognized the Fotherlys a deep shadow came upon her face, and turning towards George she spat viciously at him, and then the carriage passed swiftly around the curve behind the trees and she disappeared.

"Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell!" said George. But Abby seemed to hear him not. She leaned heavily upon him and tottered to a seat upon the bench upon the grass, and hiding her face in her handkerchief she wept.

Neither ever spoke again to the other of what they had seen, but Abby shuddered when, more than once in the days that remained to her, she thought of her own wild flight in obedience to Clayton's summons, and what was the doom that might have been hers.

CHAPTER XXI

"FAREWELL, A LONG FAREWELL!"

GEORGE and his wife came back to the grey house, for he had yielded at once to her expressed wish that it should be their home. The arrangement was made that they should live there all the year until the hot weather came, and that they should go then for a month or two to George's house upon the hill-top, where even in the warmest times there was always a breeze blowing about the porches.

From Connock George would drive to the farm every morning to direct operations there, and sometimes in the afternoon, when the sky was clear, he would take Abby with him across the river and up through the shadows of the Aramink gap to see his fields and to tarry for awhile in the summer home overlooking the valley.

She was not willing that the furniture of the Connock house should be added to or changed, and George was glad to humour her, treating as with reverence the things and the arrangements prepared long ago by Isaac and Rachel; but he filled the stables with fine horses, and he made the garden lovelier and more fertile, and he lingered about the place persistently, rarely going into the city and always returning early from the farm, resolved that Abby should have small reason to complain of loneliness.

She was glad to have him with her, he was so

thoughtful and kind and affectionate, and in his presence she had diversion from the memories that drifted into her mind. She leaned heavily upon him, and found consolation in his manly strength, his cheerful courage and his complete devotion to her.

In July the second invasion of the North by the Confederate army began, and all through Eastern Pennsylvania there was dread that the Southern host would pass the Susquehanna and force its way to the city. Many times Abby thought she might live to see that dusty grey army, which had hurried by the little school-house in the Maryland town, pouring down the Schuylikill Valley past Connock and bringing terror and devastation to that peaceful and lovely region. But the contest at Gettysburg turned the flood to the Southward again, and by the time George and his wife were ready to make their summer home on the hill, all the peril was past and the valley heard no noises but the rattle of the trains, the reverberating screams of the locomotive whistles, and the soughing of the mighty furnaces upon the river bank.

"It was most fortunate," said Mrs. Ponder to Abby, while they sat together upon the farmhouse porch one sultry summer morning, "that Lee's army did not come down the Valley. We hadn't a single thing to offer resistance with but the Connock Home Guard, and the men in that body are only nominally warriors. So far as I have been able to perceive, the solitary manœuvre they know anything about is falling back, and it is my firm belief that, if the rebels had come along, every mother's son of them would have backed from here to Canada."

When the summer was ended and George brought his wife back again to the grey house for which she

pined, he was grieved and distressed that she seemed not to have gained in strength. She tried to appear joyous and happy for his sake, but it was not difficult for him to perceive that her soul was sad and that her cheek grew whiter and her hand thinner even while her behaviour was shaped to persuade him that she had bade farewell to sorrow.

He would have been glad to have her seek before the winter came the restoring power of a milder climate and new scenery, but the South was closed against them by the war; California was inaccessible by railroad, and the Southern islands of Europe could be reached only by a sea-voyage, which Abby felt would be beyond her strength.

Thus the autumn passed and the beginnings of winter appeared with Abby slowly failing and with George's heart heavy from the fear that she would not be with him long.

She seemed to have increasing dread of everything that reminded her of the battle that had raged about her in the summer of 1862. The rumbling of the quarry-blasts morning and evening near to Connock sounded precisely like the roaring of the cannon at Antietam, and sometimes in the quiet of the night the crackling of the red-hot iron between the rolls in the Connock iron-mills was brought up the hill by the south-wind and it was hardly different from the rattling of musketry. She shivered when these noises came to her with more than usual distinctness, and she would clasp George's hand, if he were near, and with wide-open, frightened eyes, say:

"It was like that, dear George, only a thousand times worse, and all day long, all night long. I wish I could not hear it now, in our quiet home!"

The winter was spent in quietness, and it went by swiftly for George, whose happiness would have

been absolute but for the tender health of his wife. There were not many visitors, and George and Abby rarely went anywhere but to meeting. The Ponders called more frequently than any others of the neighbours, and Abby had some pleasure from Mrs. Ponder's lively talk and true sympathy. Dr. Ponder tried to be sociable, but he was a little too much afraid of George to try to argue with him, and life had no element of joy in it for him unless he could be permitted to employ his persauasive power in the work of bringing into the fold schismatics, heretics and other wanderers from the path of rectitude.

By the time the buds began to swell upon the trees in the garden about the grey house, Abby had failed so far that she was hardly strong enough to walk without assistance; and she became more feeble day by day.

One First-day morning, late in May, Abby sat in the deep armchair in the bow window and looked out upon the shining landscape above the town and at the billowy white clouds that floated indolently across the blue of the sky. George was by her and held her hand, and now and then she would turn her wan face toward him and smile at him; and he would kiss her cheek and speak tenderly to her. She seemed to herself to be hard and wicked that she could not love him more, this man so good and true and filled with love for her. It was a kind of love for him she had, she said, but there was a mightier passion within her and she could not completely master it. Nor did she really wish that it should be overcome and forgotten. But she did wish sometimes when George held her to his breast and kissed her passionately that the face of another man would not come between her and her husband.

"It is very sweet to me," she said looking up at

him and closing her hand on his, "to know that thee loves me so dearly. I wish I were more worthy of thee, dear George; I do not deserve thy love, but thee forgives me my unworthiness, does thee not?"

"I do not acknowledge it," he answered. "Thee is the dearest thing in all the earth to me. I cannot see thy faults, if thee has any. Thee has none for me."

"They always said it was so with true lovers," she answered, "but I did not fully understand it before. How wonderful it is, George, that God should make it possible for thee to care so much for so forlorn a woman as I and to blind thy eyes to my frailties! I thank Him for it, for there is nobody left for me now but thee, my husband. Nobody left! God has called them, one after another. I could not endure to be alone; and I am grateful to God for thee."

"And I for thee, my dear. It is indeed wonderful that the spirits of two separate beings should be drawn together and amid sweetness that cannot be spoken should be fused until they become one spirit. Love is the end and the beginning. It is the primary, infinite force. It is God; and we taste of God when we love each other; we shall love in heaven."

A little pang came to her when he said that. Far down in the hidden chambers of her heart she had perceived a hope, faint but persistent, that the other world would have a different reunion for her. But she said:

"Thee will weary of me on earth, I fear."

"No, dearest; thee is my joy and my peace, and I will be glad in thee more and more every day. When thee is well and strong again——"

"Ah, George!" she said, smiling sadly upon him. "I shall never be well and strong again."

"Yes thee will," he said cheerily. "Thee is very young, and thee has never had serious sickness before. Thee will gain strength as the summer grows, and when the autumn comes the roses will all be upon they cheeks again, those dear cheeks!" and he put his hand softly upon her face.

"I wish it could be so, for thy sake," she answered, "for I should be glad to repay thee for all thy tenderness by making thee very happy; but I fear I shall not stay with thee. It is for thee I fear; not for myself. Will thee go to meeting this morning?"

"I will stay with thee."

"Perhaps it may be thy duty to go. There is now no one there to preach but thee. Love for me must not blind thee to thy obligations."

"It does not," he said. "I am not called to go this morning. It is clear to me that God would have me stay by thee. I must not leave thee."

"We can have meeting here, George?"

"Yes."

"Does thee remember," she said, with her eyes fixed as if she were looking far away into the past, "that meeting we had under the apple-tree, the last time I mean, on the First-day morning, and how I heard the music and thee chided me?"

"Yes; dearest, but, I did not scold thee, did I?"

"Thee feared for me because I liked to hear it; thee could not have scolded me. Thee loved me then."

"Oh, yes, then and always!"

"I knew it, George," she said, and smiled at him again, "but I did not understand love then as I do now. How great have been the changes since that morning! It was but two years ago, but to me it seems a thousand years away. If God had called me then, perhaps it would have been better."

"Shall we worship here?" asked George, with a purpose to divert her from sad thoughts.

"As thee will, but it had come into my mind that I should like once more to have with thee a meeting for worship in the garden as we did on that day long gone by."

"Thee is hardly strong enough to go there."

"I am if thee will put thy arm about me and let me lean hard on thee, and I know thee will consent to that."

He lifted her gently from the chair, and upholding her, he passed with her through the door at the back of the hall out upon the lawn and across it to the wide-branched apple tree. Then he put a rug beneath her feet, and wrapped a shawl about her before he sat beside her.

"Thank thee, my husband," she said to him.

His arm was half around her form, and she sat close to him that she might lean upon him if her strength failed. They closed their eyes that their souls might have vision of the spiritual world.

Around them and above them the natural world was full of the loveliness of the bright sunshine and the verdure and the odour of flowers and the song of birds. The perfumed wind, blowing over the bloom of the gardens beyond, came in little puffs and ran in shivers along the grass at the feet of the worshippers and died away. From the open windows of the church, as of old, came the faint elfland harmonies of the organ and sometimes the sound of the singers who were praising God.

George, shutting the door of his soul to all things of sense, opened it wide to the Divine Influence. He worshipped, and it was worship of prayer. Claiming fellowship with Him through the privilege of the Divine Mercy, he entreated Him as it were face to face with Him to spare this wife to this husband if

that should be in accordance with the Divine Will. Coming closer and closer to this Being whom he called Father and Love, the Quaker wrestled with Him that He should consent to prolong this precious life, to put health again into that dear body, and to avert from George the agony of separation. As in the silence the fervour of his desire increased he became almost daring in his claim for the fulfilment now and here of the promise that the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and then, a wave of humility sweeping through his soul, he bowed his will to that of the Being to whom he prayed, and asked rather that God should deal with her as should be best; entreating only that, whether she stayed with him or went away, her love for him might grow stronger and stronger and his love for her might never know decrease.

He was long in the spirit, and when his prayer was ended he found that Abby's head had drooped upon his shoulder. She was quiet. He opened his eyes and looked before him. "She is praying yet," he said to himself, and sat very still that he should not trouble her. Closing his eyes again, he made in few words another prayer that God would bless her in her love for Him and for her husband.

Her stillness seemed strange to him. A sharp pang of fright went through his soul. He took her hand, as if to break the meeting. It was cold. Then he perceived she was not breathing. He clasped his arms about her and turned himself so that he could see her face to face. Her heart had ceased to beat; her eyes were fixed; her lips were smiling but fast set, and the shadow of death was upon her brow and her cheeks.

With George she had gone into the world of spirits; but he had come back alone.

He felt, as he held her there, that he should like to send out to the heavens above him a great cry of agony and of protest against this frightful tragedy that had come to him so silently and swiftly. But he restrained himself; and then, uncertain what to do, bewildered and grief-stricken, he looked about as if to find some human creature from whom he could get help and sympathy. But no one was near.

Then, stooping, he took the body of his wife in his arms and held it close to him and kissed the cold face again and again, as if she were alive. Lifting her from the bench and bearing the burden over his heart, he turned toward the grey house, hardly knowing whither he went or what next to do, having indeed his faculties almost benumbed.

By this time the people were streaming from the church and thronging the sidewalk, and some of them laughed among themselves at the spectacle of the big man thus publicly making manifestation of his affection for his little wife.

Mrs. Ponder came in from the church and stood upon her porch as George passed near to the hedge. She perceived that something unusual had happened, and after looking at him for a moment, she came to the porch-railing and asked with an anxious voice:

"Is Abby ill, Mr. Fotherly?"

Half-blinded by his tears, he recognized Mrs. Ponder, and without stopping on his way to the house, he answered.

"Alas! she is dead!"

When on next Fourth-day Abby had been laid in the burial-ground close by Isaac and Rachel, George came back alone to the grey house to take up again the life from which hope and joy had gone forever. Shutting the door against the friends whose pity had in it no element of consolation for him, he wandered about looking for and reverently consider-

ing the places and the things which had been most closely associated with Abby.

Everything she had touched, every room in which he had often seen her, had acquired a kind of holiness. The pin she wore in her silken shawl, the shawl itself that had encircled her neck, her shoes, the tiny brown bonnet, were more than *things*; they had been made sacred by her handling; something of her very self had gone into them.

As George looked and looked at them, and pored over them until the tears blurred his vision, she seemed so real—so much the most important part of the constitution of human society—a part of his own intense existence, that he felt as if life could not be real without her. He would hardly have been surprised if he had heard her gentle footsteps upon the stair outside his door, and sometimes he did imagine that he heard her voice calling him. But in truth there was silence all about him, and the house was empty and desolate; she had vanished, and whither? Dead, spiritually and finally in extinction, she could not be. From the first moment of her departure her immortal life in another world was to him a fact apart from logic and evidence. The proofs were in his own unaided convictions.

He walked amid the verdure of the garden; on the soft, sweet grass, among the vines and the flowers. He sat upon the rustic bench beneath the outspread apple-tree, and hearkened to the birds. "They seem to live forever," he whispered, half angrily. Away to the purple hills he looked, and then at the common life that still poured along the village-streets, vulgar and dull, as if there were no love and no loss and no heaven and no spiritual presence, and wondered for her and was fiercely hungry for her.

"It is the common doom," said a voice within

him. "Yes, all men and women in the past have gone that way. There is no partiality; God is just; He is loving." Yes, yes; but no argument, no persuasiveness, no imperious command to the spirit to stop its outcry, availed anything. *She* was gone, and that was just all in all to him.

The sunshine seemed darkness, and the world, thrilling with brightness and joyous life, was void and senseless without her presence.

"It was something, perhaps, to say: "Here we sat and worshipped and I touched her dear hand; here we talked of the loveliness of the hills and of the eternal hills of God where now she is; here we plucked the roses, and down these very steps we came hand in hand, she as my bride, my darling wife." There was something in these memories now glorified; but how little indeed when she is not here! Without her all else to George was hollowness.

He looked much at her picture, taken before she had met the Southerners. He saw the sweet lips with the faint smile upon them; the dear brown eyes, the lovely hair, the tender soul looking out upon him. It was beautiful and full of grace, but after all this is only white paper and brown shadow, and she has gone forever and forever.

Forever? Has she not entered into the house of many mansions where the Saviour is? Or, indeed, if it be true that God's angels wait and watch for the joy that comes to them when a human soul turns from sin to righteousness, must they not be always in conscious relation with the spirits of those beloved by them and who still await the summons? And is she not now numbered with the angelic host and so sure to come near to him—to him who loves her and longs for her, that she may know the yearning of his heart?"

"But is she mine?" he thought; "or was there

another, already dead, to whom she cleaves as her rightful husband?" That was too terrible to contemplate.

George lay by in a secret place her personal things; the gloves wrinkled by her fingers, the dainty garments, the golden buttons, the trifles of a woman's dress, and sometimes, when he had looked long at the picture of her dear face, he took these out and kissed them and wept over them, without being ashamed. Then he would pray for her (forbidden though that may be) that her soul might be washed from every stain; that she might be permitted to come near to him, if that were possible; that some sense of her presence might reach him through the veil, and that some day he might be with her, and call her wife forever and forever.

THE END.

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